

SHARING AND CARING:
A REPORT AND CRITICAL EVALUATION OF A GROWTH GROUP
MINISTRY IN A SUBURBAN LUTHERAN CONGREGATION

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To my friends:

Kathy, Sandy, Jay, Karen, Paul, Marla, Dick,
Marci, John, Bonnie and Candy.

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a report and critical evaluation of a growth group ministry in a suburban Lutheran congregation. This sharing-caring ministry has been in effect for four years and is a weekly congregational activity from September through June each year. Both members of this parish and members of other non-Lutheran congregations are included in this sharing-caring ministry.

A biblical-theological basis is included highlighting significant correlations and dissimilarities between our ministry and our scriptural-confessional stance. Psychological formulations follow the constructs of third-force psychology while the biblical-theological aspects are related to the strengthening of personal and corporate Christian identity.

Specific congregational goals are listed and used in contrast to what actually followed in the exercise of this ministry. Congregational feedback is numerically scored and included in the Appendix. Additionally, a random sample of weekly bible studies constructed for our work is also in the Appendix. Psychological testing is used as a growth tool and each bible study relates to a particular growth subject highlighted through the use of these tests.

Particular problems encountered during weekly growth sessions are discussed and evaluated in the main body of this paper. Samples of growth subjects introduced during weekly and weekend sessions can be found throughout this paper. One weekend retreat experience is

presented as an illustration of the importance of our bi-annual retreats to this sharing-caring ministry.

Major findings include our report that lay persons can be trained and used as efficient, resourceful growth group leaders. This paper also reinforces the concept that such a ministry can be effective if continued for more than a few months or even a couple of years with the same persons. Another aspect discussed is the manner in which we have been able to use the dynamics of third force psychology, and some tools of psychology in general, to enhance the Christian ministry of a congregation. Specific weaknesses resulting from this ministry are also included and discussed.

Hopefully this paper will be helpful as a sketch and critical summary of one approach to the use of growth groups in a Christian congregation.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This project was undertaken in a Lutheran parish in a suburb of Los Angeles. It was designed to continue as a regular ministry of the congregation after completion as a professional project. Approximately four years have elapsed since the start of this growth group ministry. We now have six groups meeting on a regular basis with plans to initiate more groups in the future.

As I began my pastoral work here five years ago I did so with the support and assurance from the congregation that growth groups would be an acceptable, welcome form of ministry in this congregation. Their subsequent participation, support and partnership has helped make this an enriching experience in ministry. In the spirit of our New Life I share here what our Lord has granted in our mutual ministry.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS PROJECT

As stated above this was to be more than a project for our congregation since it was felt by key members that sharing and caring groups had a place in our future. In the past various forms of group ministry had been attempted with little long range success. It was reported by participants that something was lacking in groups previously offered. It was my feeling that the affective, interpersonal dimension had not been present in past efforts at group work. With this conclusion in mind I shared my plans for our first sharing and caring group with a bible study group that had been meeting for several months. The result was the formation of our first growth group. Through sermons and printed announcements I made the invitation clear to others who might be interested. Our first group began meeting in early 1973 after eight persons responded to the invitation to participate in a sharing and caring group.

I emphasized to our congregation that our first group agreed to become a spiritual growth group. This was in line with Steen's question:

Have we religious leaders understood Jesus when he said "The Kingdom of God is in you?" Is it not our task to awaken this ultimate hunger and thirst that God has hidden in every life? Assuming that this is our job, how do we awaken this hunger so that man can begin the journey¹ of discovering his uniqueness and authenticity as a person?

¹Thomas M. Steen, "A Home for Persons," in John L. Casteel, The Creative Role of Interpersonal Groups in the Church Today, (New York: Association Press, 1968), p. 33.

We began our first group with three married couples from our parish and an additional couple from a nearby Lutheran congregation. I hoped for a better response from our congregation but it was not forthcoming at that time. Howard Clinebell illustrates:

Two forms of resistance often deter group projects. One is the erroneous belief that a growth group, whatever its name is 'for people with big problems.'...The other form of resistance is the expressed fear that "If I come, I'll be pressured to drag all the old skeletons out of the closet."²

As we met during those first few months I sent letters to parish members explaining again the nature of these groups. At the same time I felt we had a healthy beginning with our eight weekly participants. "If you're beginning as a growth facilitator, start with a group of six or seven relatively healthy people."³

One important discipline lacking in our beginning was the use of contracting to clarify goals. Reid mentions that as a useful tool in getting started.⁴ We now make contracting a regular part of group life. Examples of our contracting format are included in the Appendix of this paper.

A fundamental part of our group life was the use of bible studies and scriptural references. A sample of these studies are also listed in the Appendix of this paper. They reflect my weekly

²Howard Clinebell, The People Dynamic, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 26.

³Ibid., p. 21.

⁴Clyde Reid, Groups Alive - Church Alive, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 33.

preparation for growth sessions during the first year. The complete series of bible studies are compiled in a workbook given to each participant. More than thirty bible studies are included in addition to contracting exercises and materials used on retreats.

As we progressed through our first year I contracted with participants to become leaders of additional groups to be formed in the future. At the present time our leadership group is comprised of five members from this first group of eight participants.

Persons from other Churches are welcome in our groups. We now enjoy the presence of persons from Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches. Total number of persons enrolled now numbers forty-eight. The majority of attendees are members of this congregation. Presently we enjoy visits by interested persons who subsequently become weekly attendees at growth sessions. Our sharing and caring ministry is still growing in numerical strength.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT

"Any invitation, written or oral, should state clearly that personal growth (enrichment, development, fulfillment, strengthening) is a primary purpose."⁵ For us this meant "equipping the saints" so that we could move beyond "peak experiences" and growth exercises to effect visible, positive enrichment.

Initially, I chose the goals for this ministry and subsequently our goals were formulated by co-leaders as well. Goals listed and evaluated in this paper include:

1. Congregational Climate - the experience of genuine warmth among parishioners.
2. Acceptance of Persons - sincere, non-conditional appreciation of each person.
3. Feeling - a constructive approach to feelings; allowing for both positive and negative expressions.
4. Criticism - to encourage constructive criticism and also to introduce growth possibilities for the same.
5. Friendship - to provide almost immediate community.
6. Worship - to affect and enhance worship life.
7. Growth - the acceptance and pursuit of growth by an appreciable number of persons in this parish.
8. Therapeutic factors - to introduce health as a preferable outlook and framework; to introduce thereby greater efficiency in functional aspects.
9. Trust - to elevate levels of trust.

Hopefully this paper will be a helpful reflection of our work towards these goals. The Critical Evaluation section includes commentary and evaluation of our efforts.

⁵Clinebell, p. 25.

Chapter II

RATIONALE

I. BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THIS MINISTRY

I have included here a brief discussion of the Pauline concept of the body of Christ since at least one definition of that term leads us to the corporate aspects of the Christian life. This is followed by a sketch of German Pietism as it came to be subsequent to Luther and the period of Orthodoxy which followed his life work. Pertinent biblical-theological aspects are introduced as they relate to our sharing-caring ministry.

Particular growth subjects which need biblical-theological clarification are also discussed below. A final statement of how we synthesize our biblical-theological heritage with this ministry serves to make this a useful understanding of the foundations of our Christian ministry through growth groups.

A. Biblical-Theological Concepts

Areas to be explored in primitive Christianity would include Paul's concept of the body of Christ. I shall indicate only the material without any detailed analysis.

1. The Body of Christ This motif relates to our sharing-caring ministry because it suggests that Christians are inseparably linked together.

...for Paul man can never be understood as a self-contained individual who can be considered in himself. He is always man related to God and his fellow-men, authentic only in this relation to them.¹

Relationships among Christians can be fruitful and healthy when there is harmony in one's relationship with God. In fact, a right kinship among believers is an essential by-product of incorporation into the body of Christ.

The spatial concept of the body of Christ...proclaims in a form conditioned by the age the truth that all the community's life is shaped by the historical act of God in Jesus. Similarly, Hb. 7:4-10 says that all future Levitical generations were already there in Abraham's loins. Strictly, then, one cannot separate the crucified body of Jesus, the body of the Risen Lord, and the body of Christ which is the community...One can only see the same body from different angles. The crucified body in its ongoing work is the body of the Risen Lord, and integrated into this body the community is the body of Christ.²

¹Eduard Schweizer, "The Body of Christ" in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), VII, 1081.

²Ibid., VII, 1072-1073.

In the epistle to the Romans Paul writes "...So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."³ In First Corinthians he makes the comparison of the human body as a functioning whole to that of the Church as the body of Christ. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."⁴ This latter passage suggests unity in the body of Christ despite the individual differences of members. "The summons to unity in the community is here shaped by the idea that the body is a single totality consisting of many members."⁵ Apparently Paul found it necessary to emphasize solidarity in the early Church.

Why is this solidarity so strongly stressed? When he talks about the body of Christ, Paul is dealing with the problems presented by largely enthusiastic congregations. Unlike today, the point is not to rouse 'the laity' to activity. Rather, the multiplicity of gifts, possibilities and demonstrations is threatening to break up the unity of the Church...The watchword is solidarity, not uniformity. Paul finds it important for the Church to remain polyform.⁶

Such a congregation would remain as a complete whole while at the same time providing opportunities to affirm and celebrate differences among individual members. Our growth group ministry is a means by which that has become possible in this congregation.

³Romans 12:5.

⁴First Corinthians 12:27.

⁵Schweizer, p. 1069.

⁶Ernst Kasemann, Perspectives on Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 118-119.

The necessity and blessing of Christian liberty as the state of being in the presence of Christ is not to give everyone the same thing but to give and allow everyone what is his. This is in accordance with the demand for everyone to be in his own place a member and reflection of his Lord, where what is at issue is the world-wide sovereignty of Jesus. Consequently the ecclesiology which is stamped by the motif of the body of Christ must radically maintain and effect the priesthood of all believers ...It is only the priesthood of all believers which manifests the reality of the body of Christ as his sovereignty with its universal claim.⁷

All this remains in harmony with the central purpose of each Christian congregation. Life in the body of Christ is centered in the announcement and celebration of His resurrection. "It is primarily through the Church that Christ continues to accomplish the final purpose for which He assumed human nature..."⁸

Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggested that Church is a means through which a person is transformed in baptism into the baptism of Christ. The result is each person is thereby a member of the "visible community."⁹ What follows is life "in the body" with all its human-divine characteristics.

The Church needs space not only for her liturgy and order, by also for the daily life of her members in the world. That is why we must now speak of the living-space (Lebensraum) of the visible Church. The fellowship between Jesus and his disciples covered every aspect of their daily life. Within the fellowship of Christ's disciples the life of each individual was part of the life of the brotherhood...In the Christian life the individual

⁷Kasemann, p. 119.

⁸D.E.H. Whiteley, The Theology of St. Paul, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 197.

⁹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 223 ff.

disciple and the body of Jesus belong inseparably together.¹⁰

I believe our growth group ministry is an effective means of upholding the Christian identity of participants while at the same time it enhances the practical everyday relationships of their lives. "Among Christians the whole range of human relationships is embraced by Christ and the Church."¹¹ This means going beyond the attainment of salvation in Christ and it means structuring ministry in a way in which each person has the opportunity to grow in his or her Christian walk. "When a man is baptized into the body of Christ not only is his personal status as regards salvation changed, but also the relationships of daily life."¹² Hopefully, our sharing-caring ministry is a fruitful reflection of that statement.

¹⁰Bonhoeffer, pp. 228-229.

¹¹Ibid., p. 230.

¹²Ibid., p. 231.

2. German Pietism German Pietism gave re-birth to the concept of enriching Christian life by means of small groups. A chief goal of this movement was personal spiritual growth. Luther occasionally spoke of small group meetings as a way of promoting Christian growth but this did not become a reality during his lifetime nor immediately thereafter.¹³ Perhaps his fear of separatism and subjective religious experience as a norm kept him from developing this further. German Pietism allowed the emergence of small groups designed for spiritual growth some time after the passing of Luther in 1540.

The death of Luther precipitated a host of concerns and questions not covered by the reformer during his life work. For him it had been sufficient to describe the Church as "...the assembly of all believers, among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel."¹⁴ Yet even after legal sanction had been rendered to Lutherans by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, issues of all sorts continued to stir controversy and strife. "As long as Luther lived, his personal authority could be appealed to, but after his death controversy arose as to what he would

¹³Martin Luther, "Preface: German Mass and Order of Service" in his Works, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), LIII, pp. 63-64.

¹⁴Philip Melancthon, "The Augsburg Confession, Article VII" in The Book of Concord, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 32.

have held."¹⁵ The Formula of Concord was a considerable effort to weld together opposing opinions among Lutherans as well as provide a suitable formulation of the one faith of the evangelical Church. The subtitle to that work illustrates its thorough intent:

A Thorough, Pure, Correct, and Final Restatement and Explanation of a Number of Articles of the Augsburg Confession on Which for Some Time There Has Been Disagreement among Some of the Theologians Adhering to this Confession, Resolved and Reconciled under the Guidance of the Word of God and the Comprehensive Summary of our Christian Teaching.¹⁶

Through this document evangelical leaders sought to preserve the essential doctrines so dearly won through the reformation. Their efforts gave birth to the movement termed Orthodoxy, or "right teaching." Unfortunately Orthodoxy with its primary focus on apologetics offered little in the form of personal spiritual growth for members of the evangelical Church.

Since the Word became identified with pure doctrine a chief result was reinforcement of the doctrine of the Word.

While the Roman interpretation was attached to a mechanization of the sacrament, the evangelical viewpoint was attached to the mechanization of the Word as a means of grace. The change appeared as orthodox theology began to identify the Word with pure doctrine ...The emphasis came to be placed on doctrine...By this intellectualization...the way was open for a conception which was closely akin to institutional bureaucracy. It is not strange, therefore, that a reaction begins in connection with pietism.¹⁷

¹⁵Conrad Bergendoff, The Church of the Lutheran Reformation, (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1967), p. 114.

¹⁶"Formula of Concord" in The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 463.

¹⁷Gustav Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), pp. 366-367.

By the time of Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) the lack of individual Christian spirituality among evangelical Christians was deeply disappointing to some pastors and Church leaders. In a work entitled Pia Desideria, (Devout Desires), Spener criticized the Church of his day and called for immediate reform including the use of "Collegia pietatis", or piety groups as a means to this end.

He called for better preaching, improved education and discipline of pastors, less polemics and more edifying sermons. He applied the spiritual priesthood of believers, calling on the laity to witness to the faith by the quality of their lives. He believed the teaching of smaller groups would get closer to the people and their needs...In short, Spener desired an emphasis on sanctification that would balance the orthodox teaching of justification.¹⁸

Spener wanted to "...reintroduce the ancient and apostolic kind of church meetings...to be held in the manner in which Paul describes them in I Corinthians 14:28-40."¹⁹ Such meetings would be for the spiritual growth and enrichment of those attending.

"Everything should be arranged with an eye to the glory of God, to the spiritual growth of the participants, and therefore also to their limitations."²⁰ He suggested: "In a short time they would experience personal growth and would also become capable of giving better religious instruction to their children and servants at home."²¹

Spener and others including August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), and Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), were prominent leaders

¹⁸Bergendoff, p. 155.

¹⁹Philip Jacob Spener, Pia Desideria, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 89.

²⁰Ibid., p. 90.

²¹Ibid., p. 90.

of the movement termed Pietism. Traces of this movement are evident in our sharing-caring ministry as I shall note in the next section of this paper.

Perhaps pietism would have emerged sooner had it not been for the insistence against forms of piety set forth by Luther and his immediate followers.

We reject...the erroneous and heretical teaching...That our righteousness before God does not depend alone on the sole obedience and merit of Christ but in renewal and in our own piety ...But this piety rests for the greater part on their (Anabaptists) own peculiar precepts and self-chosen spirituality as on a kind of new monkery.²²

In some ways German Pietism with its emphasis on personal spiritual growth and its method of working with Christians in small groups is an example of the value of enhancing Christian spirituality. A more important distinction however, is that Pietism in this form was essentially an effort to renew the Church.

Another important aspect of this Pietistic movement was its effect of distinguishing the validity of the name Christian as it applied to a person's life. In this way, Pietism was a purification of the Church both individually and corporately. The fruits of German Pietism have been presented in this fashion:

The extent of devotional material in the hands of the laity was amazing and the study of scripture had been central in the conventicles. The consciousness of the meaning of prayer, discipline and spiritual growth had been deepened by the self-analysis of the awakened and an order of salvation was being proclaimed.²³

²²"Formula of Concord," p. 543

²³Bergendoff, p. 168.

3. Pietism Old and New Tom Oden in his book, "The Intensive Group Experience: The New Pietism," draws some interesting parallels between eighteenth century Pietism and the current encounter group movement.²⁴ He does not suggest they are exactly the same.

I want to avoid the reductionist impression that current encounter group processes can be boiled down essentially to what was taking place in the eighteenth-century religious societies. I am trying, rather, to unveil the striking similarities between the two movements, and...to hypothesize that there may be some discernible flow of influence from the pietistic encounter style to the current encounter style.²⁵

Oden then begins to show some interesting textual parallels from the literature of eighteenth and nineteenth century Pietism with that of current encounter group styles. Particular equations include:

- A. The Small-Group Format
- B. The Zealous Pursuit of Honesty
- C. Focus on Here and Now Experiencing
- D. The Nurture of Intimacy
- E. Revival as Marathon.²⁶

As to why many proponents of the encounter group experience do not acknowledge their "ancestry" in the Pietism of the past.

Oden answers in this fashion:

Quite simply, the tradition of emotive and quasi-fanatical pietism has long been out of favor with the socially mobile intelligentsia and cultural avant-garde who form the clientele of the encounter culture. In fact, the pietistic tradition is radically out of favor today with almost everyone...Pietistic words such as "revival" and "religion of the heart" and "conversion"...are repulsive to self-consciously modern men. The irony, of course, is that although the words are no longer acceptable, all the meanings that those words freighted have

²⁴Thomas C. Oden, The Intensive Group Experience, The New Pietism, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972).

²⁵Ibid., p. 64.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 69 ff.

been taken right back into the heart of the encounter culture.²⁷

Since our growth group ministry is a function of our congregation there is little adverse reaction to the use of terms that denote Christian personal spirituality. In fact there is a patent acceptance of many terms, phrases and figures of speech synonymous with Pietism within our growth group community. Moreover, our sharing-caring ministry is not to be equated with a form of the encounter group movement.

We are not saying that they are the same. God's saving action is not the same as persons facilitating others' growth. Rather, we are saying that there is an implicit theology of a saving relationship in the encounter group which is in some ways analogous to the saving event of which Christian proclamation speaks. Each dimension of the redemptive process in group encounter has Christological analogies: incarnation, eschatological healing, pardon, judgment, death, and resurrection.²⁸

For some participants our sharing-caring ministry has provided an opportunity for personal transformation similar to the conversion experience which may be equated with some aspects of Pietism. An event of this nature can be viewed as an important step towards spiritual and emotional health.

A prominent feature of all forms of pietism, as well as of the current encounter culture, is the concept of a spiritual breakthrough of intense emotive depth...Typically, after having first experienced themselves as being crushed by guilt and despair, they then describe how, within a supportive group, a radical turning point is experienced in which they feel deeply the acceptance and grace of God...This is the center of the pietistic conversion experience, epitomized best by John Wesley's feeling his heart "strangely warmed" when an assurance was given him that Christ "had taken away my sins, even mine."²⁹

²⁷Ibid., pp. 66-67.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 109-110.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 62-63.

Persons in our growth group ministry who report a similar enlightenment are evidence that in some way we are a reflection of "The New Pietism."

B. Sanctification as a Model

Our sharing-caring ministry is directly related to the understanding of Christian growth. According to our Lutheran theological heritage sanctification results from faithfulness to God's Word and Sacraments. Such faithfulness does not earn God's favor. Baptism is valid, for example, because "...God stakes His honor, His power, and His might on it."³⁰ Even faith then, cannot constitute God's promises, it can only receive them. Our biblical-theological understanding of sanctification includes the emphasis on the inability of humankind to self-improve while at the same time the pre-venience of God's grace in enabling Christian life and growth. "Man's natural powers cannot contribute anything or help in any way (I Cor. 2:4-12; II Cor. 3:4-12) to bring it about that God in immeasurable kindness and mercy anticipates us and has (the) holy Gospel preached to us, through which the Holy Spirit wills to work such conversion and renewal in us..."³¹ Our sharing-caring ministry is directly related to this scriptural-confessional understanding of enrichment and nurture.

³⁰ Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism" in The Book of Concord, p. 43.

³¹ "Formula of Concord" in The Book of Concord, p. 535.

1. The Human Side The effect of human effort in the process of sanctification is an important consideration in any discussion of Christian spiritual growth. For one thing, too much emphasis may be placed on human effort, at least according to our Lutheran confessions. In the same vein, forms of sanctification may be inconsistent with our theological stance. Koberle names several approaches including the ethical-moral; intellectual-speculative; and the mystical.³² James D. Smart writes of the "...suffocating fog of moralism," in his discussion of Christian Sunday Schools.³³ I believe there is a particular danger in equating moralism with Christian spiritual growth. Smart relates to this with emphasis:

Anyone who has ever been assigned the task of reading church school lesson materials in bulk, materials from seven or eight different churches, materials reaching back as far as thirty years, can testify to the high quantity of moralizing contained in them. They are literally packed with it, platitudinous moralizing, offered on the assumption that if you tell a child what is the right thing to do, he will do it. And how deadly, how insipid, how utterly boring, this moralizing is!³⁴

Köberle warns:

The progressive sanctification of the Christian dare not under any conditions be confused with a belief in moral development, for it shares neither its ethical optimism nor its confidence regarding the attainment of its purpose.³⁵

Fidelity to the Lutheran confessions means emphasizing the "lostness" of persons without the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. Our

³²Adolf Köberle, The Quest for Holiness (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1938), p. 2ff.

³³James D. Smart, The Teaching Ministry of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 77, 91, 146, 161.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 77-78.

³⁵Koberle, p. 243.

sharing-caring ministry is an attempt to reinforce this "good news" in a number of ways as set forth in this paper. I believe this to be a healthy complement to the formal preaching on Sundays which sometimes leaves the worshipper with the mistaken thought that goodness is always equated with God-ness.

He has devised forms of religion and codes of ethics by means of which he has tried to gain assurance that he can be right with God without going so far as the New Testament gospel demands. If he is good enough, then surely God will look with favor upon him. If he believes all the right doctrines, then surely he can count on God's approval. If he is meticulous in his observances of religious ritual, then God will surely not be unreasonable with him about other things.³⁶

The informal discussion type atmosphere of our small group ministry allows for questions and answers as well as formal teaching in an interpersonal fashion. Group participants have reported gaining new understanding about their relationship to God and its validity. Hopefully, we are clearing away some of the fog of moralism through our sharing-caring ministry.

2. The Objective Aspects One growth subject presented in our sharing-caring ministry is objectivity. Facilitators usually reinforce the understanding of this personality dynamic by contrasting with its opposite, subjectivity. This is a result of our use of psychological instruments discussed in another section which provide specific information about the psychological subjectivity and objectivity of group participants. Our growth group ministry is an

³⁶Smart, p. 91.

effort to relate a personality dynamic important to growth (objectivity) to a biblical-theological framework based on the objective nature of God's action and our (subjective) response. God's grace as described above is objective but it can be perceived subjectively in faith.

Our sharing-caring ministry allows for the subjective experiences of sharing feelings while reinforcing the objective nature of God's grace. At least one authority indicates that this understanding of subjectivity and objectivity is vital in the understanding of the Christian faith.

We might describe the entire history of Protestant theology down to our own times as a continued striving after the correct logical relation of objectivity and subjectivity. There are two poles; on the one side the well-meant but utterly impossible 'theocentric' attempt of orthodoxy to discuss God in a purely intellectual, descriptive manner...and on the other side the attempt of the school of Schleiermacher to make the experience of the inner life the sole norm and rule for the doctrine of God. Between them lie the many tendencies, now veering to the right, now to the left, whose rise can be explained as an attempt, in each case, to correct the exaggerations of the opposite tendency.³⁷

This was also an issue for Luther. "From 1522 on Luther had to meet the opposition of the fanatics who...made man's subjective experience the actual foundation of his certainty concerning God."³⁸

In our growth group ministry many evenings are spent covering the dynamics of objectivity and subjectivity in a cognitive fashion. I have included three bible studies related to the subject in the "New Life" workbook I created and furnish to each participant.³⁹

³⁷Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), I, 94-95.

³⁸Ibid., p. 79.

³⁹Frank M. Henderson, "New Life, A Workbook for our Sharing-Caring Ministry" (unpublished, mimeographed, 1975).

A sample of similar bible studies is included in the Appendix of this paper.

In sum, the design and practice in our sharing-caring ministry is to encourage growth by the understanding of the objective nature of God's grace while at the same time allowing for the subjective experience of God as valid.

C. The Church As The Structure For This Ministry

1. Our Church and Our Growth Group Ministry Biblical-theological motifs present in our sharing-caring ministry are related to an understanding of the nature of the Church and its ministry.

One of our Lutheran Church leaders, the late Kent Knutson described the Church in this way:

While the gospel and the basic mission of the Church do not change, the continuing changes in our society confront us with new opportunities, possibilities, and problems. We must be ready to adjust our structures from time to time because the situation into which God sends us changes and because through experience we may become wiser.⁴⁰

I am suggesting here that the ministry of growth groups is one of those "new opportunities" to which Knutson referred. How this relates to a traditional concept of the Church and how our small group ministry can be described with some consonance to historical patterns is the thrust of my discussion here.

Several concepts both biblical and theological seem appropriate. There is the recollection of the words of James that

⁴⁰Kent Knutson, Gospel, Church, Mission, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), p. 56.

Christians should "Confess our faults to one another and be healed," which would certainly be in keeping with the reformation concept of the priesthood of all believers.⁴¹ Perhaps that would be too simplistic.

The following confessional statement seems appropriate:

...The Church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly... It is as Paul says, 'One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all'...⁴²

That statement does not conflict with the basic purposes of our sharing-caring ministry. This ministry was not designed to be a replacement for the Church either overtly or subtly. It was not intended to be a "Church within a Church," since this ministry can neither replace the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments nor develop in any sense an alternative to these essentials of the Christian congregation. The Word that is preached is efficacious and the sacraments remain salutary. What is unique about our sharing-caring ministry is the interpersonal affect which is often present. This affect does not give the Word its power or the sacraments their completeness but rather it complements in an interpersonal fashion what has already been preached from the pulpit and received in the sacraments. Without this interpersonal dynamic the Word and sacraments remain valid and efficacious. Growth groups are related to the quality of life as it is lived. They are "... instruments for enlivening individuals and relationships. They're

⁴¹James 5:16.

⁴²Melancthon, p. 32.

human potentials groups, designed to help us discover and use more of our latent resources."⁴³ In a theological vein this may be equated with whatever remains acceptable to God in our efforts to compliment what has already been done for us in Christ Jesus. In that sense growth groups are not a necessary ministry of the Church but the Church does seem to be the most appropriate place for such a ministry as long as such groups do not take the place of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments as well as other established means of ministry.

2. Synthesizing Our Theology and This Ministry One growth subject which requires clarification here is the concept of synergism. That is because the term has theological implications as well as psychological ones. From a psychological point of view synergism has a basis in humanistic psychology. This third-force concept has been described by Shostrom as: "...the ability to see opposites of life as meaningfully related...When one is synergistic one sees that work and play are not different, that lust and love, selfishness and unselfishness, and other dichotomies are not really opposites at all."⁴⁴ Synergy is also applied to the understanding of human nature along the lines of the self-actualizing model. A person who has a high degree of synergy is one who can synthesize the opposing

⁴³Clinebell, p. 3.

⁴⁴Everett L. Shostrom, Personal Orientation Inventory Manual, (San Diego: Educational and Industrial Testing Service, 1974), p. 18.

natures of humankind. A person with little synergism would be characterized by the tendency to view humankind as "...essentially evil or bad..."⁴⁵ Goble describes synergy as the "merging of desires."⁴⁶

It might be too simplistic to conclude that synergy explained in these ways is the same heretical concept encountered by theologians. Goble defines the third-force term in a rather acceptable form:

When two individuals arrange their relationship in such a way that one person's advantage is the other person's advantage also, the arrangement is synergic; when one person's advantage is another person's disadvantage, the arrangement is anti-synergic.⁴⁷

That description can be applied to our sharing-caring ministry. It is chiefly when this term is interpreted as partnership between humankind and Creator in effecting salvation that heresy is possible. "If we speak about 'synergism' or 'cooperation' we must not think of God and man as co-equal partners: God is different in kind from ourselves, and belongs to a higher order. In such matters language must be of necessity analogical."⁴⁸

Our sharing-caring ministry is not based on the concept of earning God's favor through human effort.

...sanctification must also be understood as an exclusive act of God. Just as forgiveness is exclusively God's work and every cooperation or conditioning activity on man's part is completely excluded, so regeneration is an energy that comes

⁴⁵Shostrom, p. 18.

⁴⁶Frank Goble, The Third Force, (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1970), p. 29.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 110.

⁴⁸Whiteley, p. 93.

simply out of Christ's victory and does not require our supplementary efforts. It is not fitting to teach justification evangelically and then in the doctrine of sanctification to turn synergistic.⁴⁹

In our sharing-caring ministry God is present and active in the process not because of the worthiness of participants but because of His promise:

Where two or three are gathered in my name, Jesus said, there I am in the midst of them...God in Christ was willing to be present in power whenever two or three or a dozen of His followers are gathered in genuine Christian love.⁵⁰

Hence the promise and action of God's Spirit makes possible the dynamics of sanctification in our sharing-caring ministry. Without this basis the essential connection between God's active love and our humble response would not occur. With this promise it is possible to have an appropriate identity as friends of God.

So sanctification as well as regeneration must be guarded against every form of synergistic misunderstanding. What is true of justification is also true here...Of course scripture speaks of the disciples as fellow workers with God but...There is a vast difference between these words when they are used by St. Paul, the humbled witness of Jesus Christ...and when they are used by some orator of zealous piety who wants to help God build His kingdom.⁵¹

Perhaps the best example of "humbled witnesses" seen today are those in attendance at Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and other self-help groups. Our sharing-caring ministry is designed to help persons discover enrichment which is both personal and interpersonal. What

⁴⁹"Koberle, p. 95.

⁵⁰Cecil Osborne, The Art of Understanding Yourself, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967) p. 164.

⁵¹"Koberle, p. 149.

makes this possible is the knowledge that God is present through the Holy Spirit. This is in keeping with the contention that Christian growth is possible only in the context of a "walk" with God.

To sum up the results of our discussion this far, we can say that the activity of the Holy Ghost is manifested when the man who has been touched by Him in his entire personality ceases to make any claim on God and gives Him all the glory. It is a dying, into which God in mercy drives our will, against our will, and which our conscience must approve as holy, just and good.⁵²

⁵²Ibid., pp. 117-118.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THIS MINISTRY

1. Third Force Psychology Our sharing-caring groups have their psychological roots in what has been termed "Third Force Psychology." In his discussion of this approach Frank Goble traces the development of this emerging psychology which follows on the heels of Freudianism and subsequently Behaviorism.⁵³ These first two "Forces" are concerned with diagnosing illness and the application of therapeutic methods thereafter. The first two "Forces" view people as being either healthy or sick within various degrees and categories. Perls illustrates the approach of Third Force Psychology:

There is, furthermore, a growing disillusionment with the 'medical model' of people as being either sick or well. No longer can the patient of a great majority of therapists be termed a psychotic or even a classical neurotic. He is a person who has problems of living and has developed manipulative patterns of behavior which are self-defeating.⁵⁴

One pioneer exponent of this humanistic psychology was Abraham Maslow who suggested a need in people beyond the basic needs of physiology, safety, belongingness, love and esteem. The need for self-actualization:

...refers to man's desire for self-fulfillment, namely to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.⁵⁵

⁵³Goble, pp. 5-9.

⁵⁴Frederick S. Perls, "Foreword" in Everett Sostrom, Man, the Manipulator, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1967), pp. 8-9.

⁵⁵Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), pp. 91-92.

What follows includes The Desire to Know and Understand, The Aesthetic Needs, and The Growth Needs.⁵⁶ "Thus, man is initially motivated by a series of basic needs; as these are satisfied, he moves toward the level of the higher needs and becomes motivated by them."⁵⁷ The higher or growth needs have been termed "Being-values or B-values" by Maslow and others.⁵⁸ They are understood in contrast to the basic needs mentioned above.

A basic need may be identified by the following characteristics:

1. Its absence breeds illness.
2. Its presence prevents illness.
3. Its restoration cures illness.
4. Under certain, very complex, free-choice situations, it is preferred by the deprived person over other satisfactions.
5. It is found to be inactive, at a low ebb, or functionally absent in the healthy person.⁵⁹

Higher needs include:

Truth	Simplicity
Goodness	Richness
Beauty	Playfulness
Aliveness	Effortlessness
Individuality	Self Sufficiency
Perfection	Meaningfulness
Necessity	Self Esteem
Completion	Esteem by others
Justice	Love and Belongingness ⁶⁰
Order	

During growth sessions this humanistic understanding of basic needs

⁵⁶Goble, pp. 41-46.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 45.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 45.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 37.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 50.

and growth needs is explained. Participants are encouraged by leaders to discover and celebrate the growth needs of their personal lives. The growth needs listed above provide specific qualities which group members may see in themselves and each other. Sharing-caring sessions thereby serve as a means to personal growth.

A distinct goal in third force psychology is the attainment of qualities of self-actualization. This is based on the concept that, "What a man can be, he must be."⁶¹ Self-actualization, "...may be loosely described as the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc. Such people seem to be fulfilling themselves and to be doing the best that they are capable of doing..."⁶² Maslow based his definitions of self-actualizing on studies of people whose lives he believed represented the "growing tip" of humanity. He also pointed out that self-actualizers were not perfect people. "...it has already been pointed out that these people are not free of guilt, anxiety, sadness, self-castigation, internal strife, and conflict."⁶³

Nevertheless, self-actualizers have peak experiences characterized by "...moments when they felt at their very best, moments of great awe, intense happiness, rapture, bliss, or ecstasy...Thus, a peak experience is a moment in the individual's life when he is functioning fully, feels strong, sure of himself, and in complete

⁶¹Maslow, p. 91.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 200-201.

⁶³Ibid., p. 229.

control."⁶⁴

Our growth group ministry has been developed with the use of insights from the human potentials movement. The emphasis in this ministry has been on the untapped potential within each individual coupled with the self-help dynamic. Regular sharing-caring sessions have served as a useful means to this end.

Our psychological basis is also seen in the use of the dynamics of small group work. This is in contrast to more traditional, functionally based Church group meetings. Kemp suggests the following goals:

Reasonable expectations of accomplishment include:

1. Understanding of self and of the group-centered process;
2. a degree of sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others;
3. self-reliance and responsibility to oneself and others;
4. the ability to use communication skills; and
5. skill in critical thinking.⁶⁵

Each of these has been a goal of our growth group ministry. Sharing exercises, bible studies, and a mixture of cognitive-affective approaches have been used to reach these ends.

Howard Clinebell suggests goals which introduce the "vertical dimension" in growth-facilitation ministry. Starting with the premise that a sense of mystery is the beginning of all science he proceeds to blend the spiritual dimension with the insights from third force psychology:

1. Participate in the mystery - live it.
2. Celebrate the goodness of creation.

⁶⁴Goble, p. 54.

⁶⁵Clarence Gratton Kemp, Small Groups and Self-Renewal, (New York: Seabury Press, 1971), p. 179.

3. Experience transcendence (the higher power in A.A.).
4. Affirm organic oneness with creation (not pantheism).
5. Expand and enjoy your innerspace; remove inner poverty.
6. Learn ways to liberate each other and allow for fulfillment of imago dei.
7. Experience and transmit agape (unearned love).⁶⁶

Goals numbered two, three, five, six and seven of the above grouping have been well received among our weekly group participants. Number seven in particular could be described as our most definite goal. Number six continues to serve as a guideline for structuring weekly sharing exercises. Today's person, "...will seek those relationships, groupings, and arenas where participative, depth interaction, is open to him at every level of his need and aspiration as a complete human being."⁶⁷

As our groups grew in numerical strength we became aware of the additional benefit of "instant community" they provided for our congregation. "Forty to fifty percent of new members never get into the center of Church life. They need a place to stand."⁶⁸ A number of recent new members of this congregation are now regular participants at weekly sharing-caring sessions. According to some of these new friends their experience in our growth group ministry has been helpful for them in their transition as new members of our congregation.

⁶⁶"Counseling and Group Dynamics" Class Notes AM 249, School of Theology at Claremont, December 16, 1974.

⁶⁷John L. Casteel, The Creative Role of Interpersonal Groups in the Church Today, (New York: Association Press, 1968), p. 30.

⁶⁸"Counseling and Group Dynamics" January 13, 1975.

Is this not the key for which we have been searching? In the Church we have offered everything to save men from their fears and anxieties. We have preached to them-offering Christ as a way of life, offering them religious work, and innoculated them with Biblical and religious teaching. To what end and for what purpose? Have we religious leaders understood Jesus when he said 'The Kingdom of God is in you?' Is it not our task to awaken the ultimate hunger and thirst that God has hidden in every life? Assuming that this is our job, how do we awaken this hunger so that man can begin the journey of discovering his uniqueness and authenticity as a person?⁶⁹

We have not answered all those questions by our efforts in our sharing-caring ministry; but they continue to serve as a basis for our continued common efforts.

2. Theological-Psychological Contradictions Encountered

I refer here to basic differences between the biblical idea of the sinful nature of humankind versus various humanistic interpretations. Our sharing-caring ministry is rooted in the biblical understanding of persons as being "lost" without the saving grace of God in Christ. A contemporary reference is our recent national history which is a record of our corporate inability to cease from war, moral decay, and other forms of self-destruction. Niebuhr illustrates this point:

...no cumulation of contradictory evidence seems to disturb modern man's good opinion of himself. He considers himself the victim of corrupting institutions which he is about to destroy or reconstruct or of the confusions of ignorance which an adequate education is about to overcome. Yet he continues to regard himself as essentially harmless and virtuous. The question therefore arises how modern man arrived at, and by what means he maintains, an estimate of his virtue in such pathetic contradiction with the obvious facts of his history.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Thomas M. Steen, "A Home for Persons" in Casteel, p. 33.

⁷⁰Niebuhr, I, 94-95.

Our Lutheran doctrine of humankind reflects the same conclusion about our inability to improve ourselves without the help of God:

But because the inchoate renewal remains imperfect in this life and because sin still dwells in the flesh even in the case of the regenerated, the righteousness of faith before God consists solely in the gracious reckoning of Christ's righteousness to us, without the addition of our works, so that our sins are forgiven and covered up and are not reckoned to our account.⁷¹

There is a contrast then, between this theological formulation and that of the humanistic perfectionist.

A humanistic perfectionist, as well as the religious one, engages in anxious self-examination and tries to demonstrate his approach to God through the number of stages through which he has passed. The Christian likewise knows that he must press forward if he is not to fall back but because his active renewal in Christ is always inadequate he does not find in it the ground nor even the confirmation of his fellowship with God; that he finds in the promises of the gospel.⁷²

How then does Christian growth specifically take place? Even among Lutherans there has been a difference of opinion regarding the dynamics of Christian growth. Spener suggested the importance of a "covenant" sustained by each individual as the appropriate response towards growth.

But he has made a covenant with you -- from his side a covenant of grace and from your side a covenant of faith and a good conscience. This covenant must last through your whole life. It will be in vain that you comfort yourself in your baptism and in its promise of grace and salvation if for your part you do not also remain in the covenant of faith and a good conscience...⁷³

Luther placed more emphasis on the promises of God given in baptism.

⁷¹"Formula of Concord," p. 543.

⁷²Koberle, p. 243.

⁷³Spener, p. 66.

To appreciate and use Baptism aright, we must draw strength and comfort from it when our sins or conscience oppress us, and we must retort, 'But I am baptized!' And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and in body.⁷⁴

I see our sharing-caring ministry as an effort to reinforce trust in the promises of God given through baptism. Our weekend retreat experiences described below include both formal and informal discussions which center on the understanding of baptism as Luther explained it. A clearer explanation of how one responds to God's grace in baptism is the following:

...as soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the Holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit, even though we still do in great weakness. Such cooperation does not proceed from our carnal and natural powers but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Spirit has begun in us in conversion, as St. Paul expressly and earnestly reminds us, 'Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain.' This is to be understood in no other way than that the converted man does good, as much and as long as God rules him through his Holy Spirit. But if this were to be understood as though the converted man cooperates alongside the Holy Spirit, the way two horses draw a wagon together, such a view could by no means be conceded without detriment to the divine truth.⁷⁵

Biblical foundations as well as theological premises are incorporated in this sharing-caring ministry. This is an attempt to reinforce the New Testamental concept of the body of Christ as a community that lives the "good news" which comes to us through our Lord. "It is a community of men and women who have genuinely encountered the precious grace of God, and who walk worthily of the

⁷⁴Martin Luther, "The Large Catechism," in The Book of Concord, p. 43.

⁷⁵"Formula of Concord," p. 534.

gospel by not casting that grace recklessly away."⁷⁶ Participants in weekly growth sessions are encouraged by leaders to complete homework assignments which include bible readings each week. Prayer times and time for daily meditation are also suggested by leaders. Regular Sunday worship is also stressed to participants as being basic to Christian growth.

A central task in our sharing-caring ministry has been to teach the New Testamental concept of God's love. Emil Brunner described that love in this manner:

But it is only in the New Testament...that this love of God becomes the dominant theme, and indeed the central theme of the revealed truth which is proclaimed to man. 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us.' To reveal this love... that is the content of the New Covenant. Only now is it possible to express the most daring statement that has ever been made in human language: 'God is love.'...Love is the self-giving of God; love is the free and generous grace of the One who is Holy Lord.⁷⁷

In order to understand the receiving and application of this love it has been useful in our sharing-caring ministry to use the term "pre-venient grace." Hopefully, this has been helpful to participants in their understanding of how God's love came to humankind.

The biblical commandment of the love of our neighbor both in the Old and in the New Testament springs from the proclamation of the divine generous love which comes first. To put the command, the task, first--that is the misunderstanding. In the message of the Bible the gift comes first and the task second.⁷⁸

Reinforcement of our identity as members of the body of Christ

⁷⁶Bonhoeffer, p. 259.

⁷⁷Emil Brunner, Christian Doctrine of God, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), pp. 184-185.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 19.

comes from what has been preserved in the creeds of the Church. Lutherans recite these creeds at virtually every worship service so the terms and phrases are familiar and their corollaries to growth are applicable to our sharing-caring ministry. The following phrase in the Apostle's Creed which names "...the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints;" is a key to the promotion of growth concepts among group participants. Luther explained:

This is the sum and substance of this phrase: I believe there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet it is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses...By it He creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit.⁷⁹

The creedal statement, "I believe in...the forgiveness of sins,..." can be reinforced in a personal way during growth sessions. Deshler relates how this works in groups like Alcoholics Anonymous.⁸⁰ Cecil Osborne provides insight regarding the need to communicate forgiveness in a personal, affective way: "After thirty-six years as a pastor it appears to me that failure to accept forgiveness and feel forgiven constitutes the greatest single problem for most people."⁸¹ Tournier had similar insights: "Thus the spiritual life and ministry,

⁷⁹Luther, "The Large Catechism," p. 417.

⁸⁰G. Byron Deshler, The Power of the Personal Group, (Nashville: Tidings, 1960), p. 22.

⁸¹Osborne, p. 77.

far from alleviating the burden of guilt, rather increase its weight."⁸² Our sharing-caring ministry is an effort to communicate in a personal fashion the proper understanding of forgiveness as it relates to each person. This becomes experiential as group members relate to one another with understanding and acceptance. Larson illustrates:

Merely accepting Christian doctrine does not mean that one will enter immediately into a right relationship with God. One can be doctrinally sound and relationally handicapped...A right relationship means that one has heard the good news that God says to us in Jesus Christ: 'I love you. I love you as you are. I love you unconditionally...all I ask is that you begin to respond to my love.'⁸³

Hopefully, our growth group ministry reflects the love of God among participants in a dynamic personal fashion which complements our biblical-theological foundations. This has been a basic goal for this ministry.

The grace which God gives 'is never present in such a way that it is inactive, but it is a living active, and operative spirit,' the source of all good deeds...This is the heart of Luther's theology.⁸⁴

⁸²Paul Tournier, Guilt and Grace, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 41.

⁸³Bruce Larson, No Longer Strangers, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1971), p. 64.

⁸⁴Bergendoff, p. 36.

Chapter III

WEEKLY SHARING AND CARING: A REPORT

A. OUR APPROACHES

One approach we are using includes the administration of objective test instruments to measure personal needs and assess possible growth opportunities. Group members know this approach is entirely voluntary but almost all have chosen to take the various inventories as a step toward better self understanding. Others have employed a similar approach in group work. Cecil Osborne, for example, mentions personality inventories administered to nearly ten thousand persons over a three year period.¹ Abraham Maslow refers to the use of the Rorschach Test in his work.² Quentin Hand presents a whole chapter based on the use of tests with the resultant descriptions of "least changed members" and "most changed members."³

The use of such inventories can enhance the group life experience since they can provide objective information which can compliment the rather subjective sharing that usually predominates during growth sessions. In addition, they can be useful to participants who desire objective feedback concerning their personal

¹Cecil Osborne, The Art of Understanding Yourself, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), pp. 143-144.

²Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality, (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

³Quentin Hand, in John L. Casteel, (ed.) The Creative Role of Interpersonal Groups in the Church Today, (New York: Association Press, 1968), pp. 88-103.

strengths and growth needs. "The groups become the place a member comes to grips with the major issues of his life and confronts his real self."⁴

We are now placing less emphasis on psychological testing than we did at the beginning of this ministry. It is important to note that information from such instruments is not always as significant or reliable as might be supposed. Furthermore, there is a tendency for participants to dwell on poorer test scores while at the same time failing to appreciate the uniqueness of each person.

Awareness of the growth model however, can awaken not only the possibilities for growth but also the particular strengths of individuals revealed by test scores. In a sense, such confrontation can be equated with affirmation. In our groups we have seen that by emphasizing acceptance of self and others the pathological orientation which a test may precipitate can be accepted as both a challenge and guideline for growth.

1. Our Tools

We employ a variety of resources in our weekly sharing-caring sessions. Persons joining a group for the first time usually complete the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis.⁵ This is administered again some time later. The California Test of Personality is also used.⁶

⁴Thomas Steen, in Casteel, p. 40.

⁵Robert Taylor and Roswell Johnson, Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, (Los Angeles: Psychological Publications, 1969).

⁶Louis P. Thorpe, Willis W. Clark, and Ernest W. Tiegs, California Test of Personality, (Monterey: California Test Bureau, 1953).

Recently we have included the use of the Personal Orientation Inventory with its measurement of self-actualizing qualities.⁷

Participants take these tests only if they are not offended by this approach and only if they desire the information the tests provide. Certain tests can be helpful however, because they introduce subject matter for discussion in a somewhat academic fashion. A tool such as the Sex Knowledge Inventory developed by Gelolo McHugh, has been helpful for us because it allows for the discussion of a deeply personal subject in a non threatening manner.⁸ Reid notes how easily a group can take flight from an uncomfortable subject like sex.⁹

The Marital Communication Inventory is used in our two marriage enrichment groups.¹⁰ Another useful resource we employ is the Marital Intimacy Checkup developed by Charlotte and Howard Clinebell.¹¹

⁷ Everett L. Shostrom, Personal Orientation Inventory, (San Diego: Educational and Industrial Testing Service, 1963).

⁸ Gelolo McHugh, Sex Knowledge Inventory, (Saluda, NC: Family Life Publications, 1967).

⁹ Clyde Reid, Groups Alive - Church Alive, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 51.

¹⁰ Millard J. Bienvenu, A Marital Communication Inventory, (Durham, NC: Family Life Publications, 1968).

¹¹ Charlotte and Howard Clinebell, The Intimate Marriage, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 137-139.

The application of insights from Transactional Analysis is a part of our beginning growth groups as well as a specific group designed to enable persons to understand themselves and each other by means of this model. Our "T.A." group is a welcome addition to our existing sharing-caring ministry.

2. Our Weekly Growth Sessions

a. Cognitive and Affective Aspects Time is set aside according to our schedule each week for cognitive input. The interpretation of test scores is a part of this as well as the sharing of insights from the human potentials movement. Sometimes a selection is read by a participant as a result of his or her outside readings. A list of selected texts for these readings is available at the Church office and a printed bibliography is handed out at appropriate times throughout the year. Currently, tapes and films which highlight our understanding of Transactional Analysis are presented from time to time. Questions from participants are welcome by leaders throughout the evening.

The affective dimension is visible during sharing sessions. Participants have related that the main reason for their regular attendance at sharing-caring sessions is that they were offered the opportunity to share their feelings to some other person in a significant way.

During sharing periods, emphasis is placed upon feelings in the here and now. Group members are told by leaders to view their feelings as morally neutral and to let their feelings have

"a voice" as they are experienced. Members are encouraged to offer sentence prayers at the end of sessions which sum up the feelings experienced. Honest feelings shared in prayer serve to incorporate the vertical dimension which can be an appropriate terminus for each week's activity.

There is a noticeable blending of both cognitive and affective aspects during most sharing-caring sessions. The discussion of test interpretations for example, often leads to questions and answers which are followed by role play designed to express current feelings and responses.

In sum, participants indicate that without the opportunity to share each week, our group process becomes too academic and impersonal. In fact, they indicate that if regular sharing does not occur they feel their time is being wasted by attending sessions. On the other hand, if affective aspects like sharing predominate, group members begin to miss sessions because they report that they don't learn anything!

Weekly meetings are scheduled as follows:

7:00 pm	Greeting and songs
7:15 pm	Devotions
7:25 pm	Input-Cognitive; questions, discussion, etc.
7:55 pm	Sharing exercises in groups
8:55 pm	Closing prayers.

We have encountered difficulty in keeping on this schedule each week. Our tendency has been to run past the cut-off time for each period. Our recent appointment of a time keeper seems to be helping us stick to our schedule.

Informal fellowship follows the closing prayer since group

participants take turns providing refreshments each week throughout the year.

b. Confrontation and Caring In each group session a balance is sought between confrontation and caring. In our first sessions confrontation comes as each person is asked to participate. Anxiety is often present among members as they await their turn to share. I believe such anxiety can be healthy and growth productive, and it may well be what Leslie has described as part of the process of "nudging."¹²

For sharing, two basic suggestions are kept in force during growth sessions. They are: be honest and be specific. What is implied here is an appropriate honesty which does not result in having group members "pull skeletons out of the closet" for effect. Group members understand that we are not interested in hearing all the bad things they (or their spouses) had done. When group participants start to "gossip" this is discouraged by leaders who more or less gently steer them back to the sharing of their feelings. In all this a simple acceptance of honest feelings prevails.

At times in early sessions excessive anger that was offensive and not welcome by group members would surface. Reminding participants we were a growth group was a regular responsibility for me as the leader of our first group. "In the early sessions members usually focus on problems rather than potentials. The leader, in

¹²Robert C. Leslie, Sharing Groups In The Church, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), pp. 176-179.

each stage, affirms unused strengths and resources in individuals and in the group as a whole."¹³

A useful illustration of our confrontational aspects comes from one of our earliest growth sessions with our first group. Mrs. M. was being overtly critical of her husband as she verbalized moralistic and caustic judgements of his behavior.¹⁴ During the session test feedback was given to members and Mrs. M. discovered a pronounced elevation of her score on Hostility. In addition, excessive scores on both Dominance and Impulsiveness served to illustrate her temperament at that time as a Hostile-Dominant person. Mrs. M. then began to understand how she was relating to her husband and this particular confrontation seemed to precipitate what could be termed the gestalt "aha" experience. As a result everything seemed to fit together for Mrs. M. in her own awareness of herself as an unhappy wife and mother. In the terminology of Transactional Analysis her angry, critical Parent had been forced "out of the closet" and she immediately retreated to her helpless, bewildered and emotionally battered Child. In that moment she was convicted and faced with her own pain which eventually became the growth point for her new life.

Subsequently, others reflected their surprise and pleasure at the change in Mrs. M. In a manner welcomed by others she had learned to identify her hostility when it surfaced and use it

¹³Howard Clinebell, The People Dynamic, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 31.

¹⁴All names in this paper are pseudonyms and case histories are cited with the permission of individuals described.

creatively. At those times she comforted her frightened Child with the assurance of God's grace and the security of His residence in her life.

Her hostility was rooted in her insecurity and her anger came from the fear of the loss of love and self esteem for herself and her husband. Her critical temperament was the result of a lack of self acceptance and love. She was angry with her husband because she was angry and frightened with herself. God would love her, she thought, if she were a good person. The pronouncement and experience of God's unearned love and favor was the liberating force that led to growth for Mrs. M.

Mr. and Mrs. M. were now able to understand the nature of some of their problems and share them with our concerned, listening community. The repetitive reinforcement of our confrontation and caring and the assurance of God's unending love resulted in visible personal growth and subsequent marriage enrichment for Mrs. M.

Another illustration is the experience of Mrs. R. who had similar test scores and personal life history. Both Mrs. M. and Mrs. R. learned a great deal from each other's sharing. Their spouses too began to see that they were avoiding important issues in their married lives but that they could be instrumental in the reinforcement of love and care their spouses needed. Mr. M. and Mr. R. received test scores that indicated Subjective tendencies and confrontation thereby became a key for their growth as they realized they were not relating on an Adult level. Unfinished business from adolescence kept them ceaselessly trying to prove their masculinity. Confrontation followed by

affirmation of their uniqueness helped them to see themselves more Objectively and lovingly.

As group leader in our first sharing-caring enterprise I too was confronted on several occasions. Even now the regular presence of my wife continues to enhance this aspect. My confession here is that I was somewhat anxious about her presence at times but this has served to rule out having members place me "on a pedestal" while at the same time it has ensured a degree of genuineness on my part.

An additional aspect of confrontation includes the use of the Confrontation Audit which I developed and applied to our group work. A copy of this exercise is included in the Appendix of this paper. This simple tool provides group members with a way of evaluating their ability to confront effectively. Feedback from fellow group participants is the source of this evaluation. Key aspects include:

1. Facts - Be certain you are properly informed.
2. Decision - Seek a fruitful conclusion.
3. Resolve - This includes assertiveness and resolution.
4. Expediency - To be effective without being excessive.
5. Respect - Respect for persons involved is essential.
6. Affirmation - Affirmation is a proper closure.

As group participants role play both hypothetical and real situations scores with a numerical value are recorded by peers and later shared during debriefing. All feedback is considered valid.

Caring is demonstrated in a number of ways during sharing-caring sessions. There are verbal affirmations which follow experiences of confrontation. Prayers at the end of sessions are a verbal affirmation of both the process and the people mentioned in prayer. Non-verbal expressions include hugging, stroking, facial affirmations, kissing, and other forms of greeting and acceptance.

Individual exercises that involve sitting in the middle of the group are termed "love-seat" experiences. Couples who work in the "love-seat" configuration hold hands while facing each other during the exercise. Often a peer group member will sit adjacent to the "love-seat" to facilitate confrontation and caring among those working. Afterwards, exercises are debriefed as feedback becomes a learning mode for our group life. The affirmation at the end of these activities serves to cement the experience with mutual acceptance.

Sometimes after a sharing-caring session a participant may ask a "Why" question and at those times facilitators will point out we are essentially a growth group concerned with personal-social emergence and self-actualization more than with diagnosis of pathology or arm-chair conclusions about human behavior. "The focus of traditional therapy--on negative feelings, accumulated hurts and frustrations, patterns of relating to the past--are not ignored, but they are always balanced by the positive growth emphasis."¹⁵

Caring is enhanced as we learn to rely on the resources of the group itself. We suggest that participants are to minister to one another through our growth group experience. One person's pain, for example, can be the bridge to another person's life. Similar experiences that are shared serve to enhance the closeness of participants to each other. When people are connected to one another in such a fashion, contact and intimacy can be the result, while growth can be the response. The use of diads and triads has helped make this

¹⁵Clinebell, p. 4.

a possibility in our groups. Relating on a one-to-one or one-to-two basis has resulted in facilitating greater closeness between group members.

Verbal exercises that blend both confrontational and caring aspects include those listed by Stevens.¹⁶ They include:

Qualities I admire in myself are...
 I want to tell you...
 Don't...
 I'm avoiding...
 I try to please you by...
 I won't...
 What are you not telling me?
 What do you see when you look at me now?
 What are we avoiding?
 I could shock you by...
 I give you permission to...

An important aspect of our group life is the maintenance of confidence and mutual trust. This is significant since group members sometimes reveal a great deal of themselves during sharing sessions. Generally, this sharing has not precipitated gossip nor betrayal of confidences. Group members continue to share themselves and respect the privacy of each other. In fact, secrets and confidences can serve to draw together each small group community. We have drawn closer together as we discovered common faults. One reinforcement has been the constant reminder that we are best described as pilgrims in this life who each limp somewhat along life's journey. That reminder has become almost celebrative.

¹⁶John O. Stevens, Awareness, (Moab, UT: Real People Press, 1971), pp. 181-182.

3. Some Of Our Growth Subjects

The three sample areas that follow are only a few of the subjects covered during growth sessions. Both cognitive and affective approaches are used in the treatment of our growth topics by leaders. This is an effort to include the use of feelings as instruments of learning. "More recently, researchers in motivation have concluded that emotion plays an important part in all types of behavior including decision-making."¹⁷

Charlotte and Howard Clinebell teach the value of turning problems into new possibilities for growth. "It helps to remember that most barriers can be lowered by becoming aware of what they are, communicating about them and joining in an effort to improve the connection in the relationship."¹⁸

a. Expressive-Responsive Being Expressive-Responsive means having the ability to express specific feelings whenever they are experienced. This has become an important teaching-learning area in our group life. Sometimes interpersonal conflicts arise because a person cannot express warmth, tenderness, appreciation, joy, or even sadness. In Transactional Analysis terminology this might be described as the critical Parent blocking out the nurturing Parent.

¹⁷Clarence Gratton Kemp, Small Groups and Self-Renewal, (New York: Seabury Press, 1971), p. 156.

¹⁸Clinebell and Clinebell, p. 60.

Often the background message is: "Big boys don't cry;" or "Don't be mushy or artificial; control your feelings." Such messages serve to block deep feelings that need expression. Deshler comments:

The need to communicate is basic in man. Without the power of self-expression, he cannot develop mature personality. Those who have made the greatest impact upon the world have been able to do so through their ability to communicate their thoughts, feelings, convictions, and aspirations by means of art, sculpture, writing, music and speech.¹⁹

We have found it helpful to encourage the expression of feelings during sessions by explaining that feelings are morally neutral. In a sense, a feeling may be neither good nor bad but rather something that requires attention and expression. The biblical references in the Appendix of this paper illustrate Jesus and His disciples as persons who had feelings and demonstrated them. The passage in Mark 10:13-16 which tells of the bringing of children to Jesus illustrates His warmth in receiving them.²⁰ This can be a valid biblical model for growth participants who hesitate to share their negative feelings, or conversely, their positive feelings of warmth.

The giving of gifts during growth sessions is especially appropriate for our study and application of Expressive-Responsiveness. What is sought here in terms of Transactional Analysis is the resurrection of the Adult ego state. Harris illustrates: "The Adult can consciously commit itself to the position that to be loving

¹⁹G. Byron Deshler, The Power of the Personal Group, (Nashville: Tidings, 1960), p. 34.

²⁰St. Mark., 10:13-16.

is important. The Adult can see more than a personal mandate in the idea "it is more blessed to give than to receive."²¹

b. Dominance - Submissiveness This is another growth subject introduced during sharing-caring sessions. In Transactional Analysis the dominating person is the "Not OK" person.²² This insight is shared with group members to help them understand the dynamics of dominance and submissiveness in interpersonal relationships. Positive verbal stroking including "OK" messages are encouraged here as a means of freeing the Adult ego state so the individual can either lead or follow when appropriate.

The submissive person can be equated with the frightened Child who needs a Parent but who also fears one. "We are talking now about people who are generally submissive, low in self-confidence, full of conventional values, filled with inner need to conform."²³ Some members of our groups seem to fit this description. These friends exhibit lack of initiative coupled with dependency and this often limits active response on their part during growth sessions. They appear to resist responsibility for leadership and group cohesion, as well as responsibility for their own growth.

Conversely, we have seen some excessive dominance displayed by participants during growth sessions. Knowles illustrates:

Dominating--trying to assert authority in manipulating the

²¹Thomas A Harris, I'M OK--YOU'RE OK, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 95.

²²Ibid., p. 88.

²³Samuel Southard, People Need People, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), p. 66.

group or certain members of it by 'pulling rank,' giving directions authoritatively, interrupting contributions of others.²⁴

From Transactional Analysis we can learn that an important key is to relate to each person's "Not OK" feelings with acceptance and warmth. Harris sums up:

As one becomes sensitive to one's own Child, one becomes sensitive to the Child in others. No man loves the man he fears. We fear the Parent in others; their Child we can love. One helpful practice in a difficult transaction is to see the little boy, or the little girl, not in a condescending way but in a loving, protective way. When in doubt, stroke. When one is responding to another's Child, one is not afraid of the other's Parent.²⁵

c. Hostility - Tolerance A third growth subject introduced in our sharing-caring ministry is Hostility - Tolerance. This trait on the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis is described as either "Accepting, patient and humane;" or as "Critical, argumentative, and punitive."²⁶ Southard provides further insight into the dynamics of Hostility: "Amazing contradictions appear in such people. Major opinions are isolated from one another. A dogmatic individual may hold to half a dozen beliefs, none of which are consistent with each other."²⁷

Harris shows that prejudice, which can be equated with Hostility, is the result of an overlap of the ego states in which the

²⁴Malcolm and Hulda Knowles, Introduction to Group Dynamics, (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 55.

²⁵Harris, p. 93.

²⁶Taylor and Johnson, p. 6.

²⁷Southard, p. 84.

Adult becomes contaminated.²⁸ It is the Parent then who dominates a portion of the Adult but the individual allows this because of the safety and security of the Parent. Howard Clinebell has additional insights:

Growth groups seek to help people interrupt their self-damaging Child/Parent interaction and learn through practice to keep the Adult side in charge and the nurturing, limit-setting Parent and the fun-enjoying, creative Child in healthy balance with each other.²⁹

Again, a loving "You are OK" appeal to the Child ego state is a starting point for healthy resolution of the critical temperament. "...the outcome will depend on whether the Child is hostile or favorably disposed toward the sender..."³⁰ The hostile person needs love and security which fellow group members may sense and respond to. This has been our experience in dealing with this growth subject.

Many children learn hostility as a result of Diluted Transactions, described by James and Jongeward as being "...half hostile, half affectionate."³¹ Nicknames and teasing are earmarks of Diluted Transactions. Often the sender or initiator of Diluted Transactions is not even aware of their punitive effect.

Theologically, the understanding and acceptance of God's love is the most appropriate response to hostility. It has been heart

²⁸Harris, p. 98.

²⁹Clinebell, The People Dynamic, p. 53.

³⁰Eric Berne, Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy, (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 140.

³¹Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward, Born To Win, (Menlo Park, CA: Addison Wesley, 1973), pp. 110-111.

warming to see hostility harnessed creatively as members of our growth groups have embraced the love of God for them in Christ Jesus.

B. KEY FACTORS

1. Absences

In some instances absences cannot be avoided. The press of daily routines and individual schedules sometimes preclude attendance at each sharing-caring session. Whenever an absence does occur however, it is obvious to those present. One or two less members does seem to make a difference. There is also the factor of lost momentum for the absentee. Subjects covered and shared experiences cannot be retrieved with their total affect the following week. Overall, we experience a sensation of movement from week to week. Regular attendance is encouraged by both leaders and group members.

A significant factor is the intentional absence. In this case the participant is able to attend but intentionally avoids being present. Gordon in his discussion of the group centered group highlights the significance: "A group's adjustive behavior will be most appropriate when the group utilizes the maximum resources of its total membership. This means maximum participation of all group members, each making his most effective contribution."³² This is not possible when some group members are missing.

A related factor is the disaffection of group members present when absences occur. When this happens leaders encourage sharing of

³²Thomas Gordon, "The Group-Centered Group," in Charles F. Kemp, Perspectives on the Group Process, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 63.

feelings about the absence among group attendees. When the absentee returns, he or she is welcomed back and rendered simple verbal encouragement to attend regularly.

In one instance a married couple attended each week until we shifted attention away from them, directing ourselves to the needs of others present. During one of their absences we discussed our feelings about this and agreed that some form of confrontation would be appropriate. With the consensus of the group I wrote a letter to this couple asking them to be present at a future session. When they attended their next sharing-caring session I simply shared my feelings with them about their recent absences. Feedback from group members later indicated that they did not feel I was judgemental towards this couple. The response of this couple was a step forward because they came to "own" their need to be a regular part of this growth activity. Since that time they have been regular attendees serving each week as facilitators of their own sharing-caring group.

Our experience has taught us that the problem of absences can be corrected with loving confrontation. Absentees may be encouraged toward better attendance if they realize they are important and that their presence or absence can grossly affect the group climate and process. No participant has reported finding our unstructured confrontation offensive.

2. Resistance

Absences may be interpreted as a form of resistance but in this section I want to include another dynamic of our group life that was experienced, namely, passive resistance.

An example is Mr. P. who as a regular attender participated in most of our group exercises. As time passed however, it became clear that Mr. P. was simply going through the motions during growth sessions and later failing to apply what he had learned. I offer that description because this was the consensus of the group. We spent many evenings with our attention focused on Mr. P. but it seemed that he was determined to follow his pattern of asking for help from the group, accepting their suggestions, stating his intention to follow through, and then not doing anything.

Things came to a climax near the end of the first year. As leaders we discussed whether we might become more directive with Mr. P., listing goals and later checking out to see if he actually followed through. In our concern for him we almost became perscriptive. However, in time it became clear to all concerned that Mr. P. did not really want that kind of response from his fellow group members and leaders. I conclude now that Mr. P. had decided how much he wanted to change before his group experience began. We had difficulty accepting his preconceived limitations but as a result had to learn to accept Mr. P.'s resistance.

In sum, we allowed Mr. P. to remain where he was and offered him a place to stand in the group. This struggle with Mr. P. was

fruitful because we had actually learned to accept Mr. P., with his preconceived resistance. Quentin Hand notes that: "The deliberate attempt to use prayer groups for personality change can be dangerous from both psychological and theological perspectives."³³ We are learning to appreciate the thrust of that statement as well as the further insight of Quentin Hand as he continues; "Rather let the prayer group member seek first God and His kingdom, and then growth will come as well."³⁴

We are learning not to assume that because participants display eagerness and enthusiasm about their participation in our sharing-caring ministry that they are actually in a growth status. Gordon has clarified this point: "It is here that group behavior can be deceiving. Often all members of a group are active, but upon closer examination it is usually found to be what McGregor has called reactive behavior...Few groups ever reach the state where its members are given this opportunity."³⁵

3. Misunderstandings

I am using the literal interpretation of the word misunderstanding here. We experienced some misunderstandings in our groups and one reason for this was that wholesome listening was not employed.

³³Hand, p. 102-103.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 102-103.

³⁵Thomas Gordon, "The Functioning of the Group-Centered Leader," in Kemp, Perspectives on the Group Process, p. 66.

This listening is characterized by Gordon as the "linking function."

In face-to-face discussion groups, it often happens that one person will say something, then a second person will add a new idea but without conveying the relationship of his idea to the first contribution...The 'linking function' of the group-centered leader is related closely to his function of reflecting the meanings of members' statements...Thus, by clarifying the meaning of a comment, the group-centered leader makes clear to the group how the new contribution is related to the previous discussion.³⁶

Facilitators report that sometimes group members misunderstand what is being said and this is not always because participants are not listening.

Additionally, there are times when something shared seems awkward, inappropriate or premature. "If a leader senses that someone is revealing very personal problems prematurely...or in an inappropriate setting..he should avoid responding in ways that focus on what has been said. He should help the group share...and not overload the feeling circuits."³⁷ Spontaneous caring followed by affirmation on the part of group members is the typical response at these times. This seems to minimize group stress since the affirmation incorporates the "OK" aspect of the person and his or her situation.

Leslie notes that communication cannot be avoided in group life.³⁸ We find it most helpful to focus on feelings present in the person sharing. If those feelings seem excessive and offensive we usually allow the health of catharsis to take effect. The response

³⁶Ibid., pp. 240-241.

³⁷Clinebell, The People Dynamic, p. 45.

³⁸Leslie, p. 28.

of facilitators and group members becomes one of passive acceptance at those times.

4. Hidden Agendas

Hidden agendas did surface during the first few months of our sharing-caring ministry. In Transactional Analysis terminology hidden agendas are:

When transactions have a hidden agenda, the actual words come from one pair of ego states and the real meaning from another pair. In these ulterior transactions, tone of voice and body language often carry the hidden meaning, and a question that sounds innocent is an ulterior stroke with a negative purpose.³⁹

The most common form of hidden agenda we experienced was when a wife or husband would coax their spouse into attending growth sessions and then use the opportunity to share as a launching pad for a tirade against their partner. On more than one occasion we noticed a spouse trying to get the group to "gang-up" on his or her spouse. Ploys for assistance from the attacking spouse were displayed until we suggested the role of married partners be one of loving fidelity phrased in the following manner: "Just love your wife/husband and let God change her/him; not the other way around."

5. Pairings and Subgroupings

The pairings and subgroupings that were evident in our sharing-caring ministry seemed to enhance group cohesion. Group members discovered and celebrated their common ground, facing corporately but

³⁹Muriel James, "The OK Boss In All Of Us", Psychology Today, vol.IX:9,(February 1976), 35.

honestly their uncovered biases and their need for growth. In all of this an appropriate honesty remained prevalent. This was helpful for our timid, shy group participants. In particular, they stated their belief that it was easy for others to share openly during growth sessions but that it was conversely, difficult for them. The unreserved members replied that it was not easy for them to share but that they usually volunteered to share first because they wanted to avoid the anxiety of waiting for their turn. They indicated that they seized opportunities to share during growth sessions because they felt insecure without saying something.

Outside the context of our small group life participants began to display a cohesion that made them appear almost as a subgroup of our parish. They became known as "the group," but they seemed to welcome this designation. Others reported that talking with one was like talking with all group members. In general, group participants exhibited warmth and spoke with enthusiastic expression.

One example is Mrs. P. who was irregular in her worship attendance. After her tenure of a few months in our group life she became a regular attender of worship services with her involvement and enthusiasm for Church activities becoming more and more visible. Non-group members asked Mrs. P. to relate what had changed her so dramatically and she referred to the affirmative aspects of our sharing-caring ministry as the basis for her renewed self-acceptance.

Reid warns of the inherent danger possible with strong group cohesion which may result in the formation of a power clique.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Reid, p. 103.

Although some who do not participate in our growth group ministry have referred to group members as a strong social body there has been no criticism of this ministry as having the form of a power clique. We continue to enjoy an appropriate wholesomeness between group members and those not attending growth sessions.

Chapter IV

WEEKEND SHARING AND CARING: A REPORT

A. OUR APPROACHES

Weekend retreats have served as the starting point for a majority of participants in our weekly sharing-caring ministry. The construct of the retreats is related to three main areas of concentration. First, Confrontation with Faith; Second, Confrontation with Love; and Third, Confrontation with Grace. Exercises are scheduled in such a way that they direct the process towards these three main subject areas.

More specific and far-reaching goals include:

1. Successful entrance into the process.
2. Resultant weekly participation afterwards.
3. The discovery and celebration of community among participants.
4. The giving and receiving of "gifts."
5. The affirmation of each person.

Our agenda is the distillation of previous approaches found successful.

It is presented to retreatants as an "open" agenda and their constructive comments are welcomed.

1. Our Agenda

Friday Evening

Songs
Devotions
Intercessions for those attending
Retreat Contracts/Question sheet
Our Creed/Rationale

In Small Groups -

How to get the most from this experience (Be open, participate,
be flexible)
Sharing - How does it feel to be here?
Litany of welcome (Leaders)
Prayer (Leaders)

Break

In Large Group -

Test feedback
Trait patterns (Open Forum)
Closing - Quiet Time (five minutes) Complines

Saturday

7:30 Soft music - wake up
Prayer hike (optional)
8:30 Breakfast
Songs
Devotion

In Small Groups -

Affirm God - Psalm 103: "This is My Father's World," etc.
Affirm each other - Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:13-16
Affirm God's care - Psalm 23
Affirm each other (Leaders only)

Discuss spiritual growth areas - Anger, Inferiority, Fear, Guilt
Confrontation with Faith (Individually)
Leaders confer

Lunch - Include feedback from participants
Confrontation with Love
Love letter presentation/discussion
Write love letters
Dialogue love letters

Free time/sharing-relation one to one

6:00 - Dinner
Songs - Devotions
Confrontation with Grace
What Grace means to me - Leaders

Meaning of worship - communion
Confession - written as love letter to God
Affirm each other in triads

Break

In Large Group -

Burning of confessions

Personal affirmation of participants by pastor
Anointing and foot washing
Group participatory prayer

Sunday

Breakfast - Songs
Love letters (assigned)
Worship - Holy Communion
Exchange love letters
Complete retreat expectation questionnaire
Complete leader effectiveness surveys

As in our weekly sessions there is a blending of both cognitive and affective aspects throughout the weekend. The retreat environment makes possible a heavier affective dimension which can leave the attendee with a strong emotional impression. Subsequent weekly involvement by retreatants is often the result of this substantial affect.

2. Our Shared Responsibilities

I have conducted nine retreats related to this ministry with the collateral support of from five to seven co-facilitators. We arrive at the retreat site early on Friday and use the available time to prepare ourselves through discussion, mutual encouragement, and prayer. Specific assignments are finalized and suggestions for inclusion in the agenda are encouraged. A similar session is conducted at conclusion of the retreat on Sunday.

Leaders contribute a great deal as they share what Grace or Love means to them. Their demonstration of verbal affirmation is both pedagogical and experiential. Their openness and sharing of themselves serves to put attendees at ease from the beginning. Our retreats average from thirty to thirty-five in attendance and leaders

are necessary for work in smaller sub-groups.

At the beginning of the retreat, leaders serve as greeters to those arriving. Later they include retreatants by name in their opening prayers. Leaders seek opportunities to relate on a one-to-one basis throughout the weekend.

At least once or twice during the weekend I meet with leaders to entertain their feedback and suggestions. Overall I have enjoyed a wholesome, enthusiastic, partnership with these friends as they lead. They have become essential to the process.

B. KEY FACTORS IN WEEKEND SESSIONS

The following approaches were employed during weekend growth sessions:

1. Prayer

Prayer was presented as an expression of honesty and affirmation of God, self, and others. Many retreatants report this is their first experience in this type of prayer. The teaching of prayer is a central part of our Confrontation with Faith since we ask participants to spend time alone in prayer on Friday morning. This is our attempt at "chimney-sweeping;" that is, re-establishing the vertical dimension between God and persons attending.

One of the principle objectives of the personal group is to teach people to pray...Whatever else the group may do for its members if it fails to teach them to pray, it leaves them without one of the most effective aids to spiritual growth maturity. No small degree of the strength of the personal group is derived from the fellowship of prayer. This fellowship can be experienced in silent prayer, but it is greatly increased by audible prayer.¹

The participatory group prayer which follows anointing and foot-washing on Saturday evening is an opportunity used by most attendees to share themselves in audible prayer. This new life in prayer is a vital part of our small group ministry.

2. Expression of Feelings

Expression of feelings was strongly encouraged by leaders

¹G. Byron Deshler, The Power of the Personal Group, (Nashville: Tidings, 1960), p. 36.

during the weekend retreat. Smiles were interpreted by attendees as evidence of some degree of affect. Leaders would ask if such smiles were a mask or the actual expression of satisfaction and were pleased to find that usually smiles were the sign of some inward joy. Positive verbal reinforcement of God's unconditional love precipitated a variety of joyous reactions throughout the weekend.

Tears were also in evidence throughout the weekend. At these times leaders asked, "What are you feeling right now?" Accordingly, the tears were often the signal of unmasking one's hidden self and we were able to affirm the acceptance of honesty and unmasking at that point. Tears also served to promote self-acceptance in another way since others learned thereby that it was "OK" to share one's deepest emotions.

Leaders too, expressed their feelings openly without embarrassment. Hugging and physical stroking were commonplace.

In sum, most members and leaders both were able to share their feelings openly throughout the weekend and thereby served to humanize our vocabulary and group agenda.

3. Gift-Giving

Our agenda included the format of triads for Saturday evening and in that configuration persons were encouraged by leaders to affirm one another. Since our leaders have done this many times before in weekly sessions they were able to enhance this gift-giving with poise.

This was followed by my personal verbal affirmation of each person in turn, in the center of the group circle. This process takes

some time but it seems to enhance the confrontation-caring model.

Sentences I used began: "I appreciate your....;" "Thank you for...;" and "This is what I have received from you..."

Before each person returned to the group circle I joined with leaders in a ritual of scriptural foot-washing which served as a non-verbal gift to persons I had verbally affirmed. Leaders assisted with the foot-washing by removing shoes, fetching water, drying feet, and re-tying shoe laces. Nearly all retreatants offered their appreciation of this non-verbal, New Testamental gift.

4. Sharing

Leaders facilitated this aspect by sharing how growth was taking place in their lives. Leaders spoke of the unconditional love of God as they had received it.

Facilitation towards growth was enhanced by the honesty of leaders; their expressed need for continual growth and their candid expressions of anxiety at being partially responsible for the weekend experience. Some of these friends recounted in detail their experiences in weekly growth sessions. This included the importance of patience with oneself as well as patience with the process as a key to consistent growth.

The point is that in the small group many members feel an acceptance in a way they have never experienced before, and the acceptance is not only of the nice parts of their lives but of their whole being. There has never been a time in which the need for people to be in touch with their whole selves was greater than today.²

²Robert C. Leslie, Sharing Groups In The Church, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 102.

The sharing by leaders enabled new participants to see this acceptance had happened in the lives of people they knew.

5. Worship

Devotional periods served to keep us in touch with the vertical dimension. Here again leaders shared their personal beliefs, prayers and theological orientation. This input was most helpful in making the vertical affect an experiential event. A goal sought here is spelled out by Deshler:

It is the objective of the personal group to bring about a revitalization of faith, a deepening of commitment, a cleansing of all relationships in order that each member may live the life of a disciple of Christ both in the Church and in society. When the small group leads persons into this kind of Christian experience, it is truly a leaven both in the Church and in the world.³

Sunday morning we celebrated The Sacrament of the Altar in informal fashion. Bread and wine were distributed among members who communed each other. Along with the reception of the sacrament the words of absolution phrased rather personally were offered. The spontaneous prayer of one participant was noteworthy because it summed up the retreat experience and captured the joy we all felt during the closing service. The words of his prayer were:

Lord, I have been in your Church for over sixty years but I have never experienced love like this before.

³Deshler, p.

Chapter V

CRITICAL EVALUATION

I. PERSONAL EVALUATION OF THIS MINISTRY

A. Hindrances Encountered

This includes my personal evaluation of our sharing-caring ministry along with a list of what may be considered to be important weaknesses. The following subjects were also noted as weaknesses by co-leaders during leadership feedback sessions.

1. Attrition "The maintenance and ongoingness of the group depends upon the degree to which the experience satisfies individual and group needs."¹ Only three persons from our first group no longer attend weekly growth sessions. Two of the three have moved to another state and a third person simply no longer attends.

Our records indicate a total of sixty-two persons have been participants in our sharing-caring ministry. This does not include visitors, "false-starters," or similar cases. Among the sixty-two participants only thirty-seven are confirmed members of this parish. Overall, I believe our retention factor is high.

From the total of sixty-two participants, eighteen have dropped out. Of these eighteen, seven are non members of this parish

¹Clarence Gratton Kemp, Small Groups and Self-Renewal, (New York: Seabury Press, 1971), p. 40.

who eventually moved to another community. A sixth person experienced illness and has not yet returned while the remaining ten are still active members of our parish although they do not attend growth sessions. This is a reflection of almost four year's time. It is important to note here that group members participate for two hours each week and attend at least one retreat each year. This is part of our group contract which we share with new attendees. Although absences do occur, generally they are not related to any willfull desire to break the contract, but are rather situational, related to illnesses and unavoidable conflicts.

2. Passive Dependency We experienced passive dependency in at least three ways including:

a. Towards leader's "Small group methods are most effective with relatively whole people whose growth impulses are active and accessible."² It seems as if a large number of folk were drawn to our sharing-caring ministry because of their rather strong dependency needs. Test scores with low percentages in the area of Dominance were common. Perhaps in our Lutheran tradition we tend to "over-parent" our people and our groups might be viewed by parish members as an extension of that process.

It was difficult at times to reinforce the role of our leaders as that of a nurturing shepherd. Some group members seemed to want leaders to provide answers to their questions and prescribe behavior

²Howard Clinebell, The People Dynamic, (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 9.

for their growth. Southard illustrates well what is being described here:

How will we ever be able to find the true desires of an introverted, shy individual? If we question or prod, the person retreats further in himself like a turtle into his shell. If some answers are coaxed out, they are weighted and carefully considered before expression. The few tentative expressions of selfhood are very indirect and complicated. There is a lack of spontaneity, a constant waiting for somebody else to say something.³

We experienced these words of summation on many occasions.

b. Towards group participants Group members also "leaned" on each other during growth sessions. Quiet participants quickly identified the talkers in their group and each week seemed to expect the more verbal attendees to do most of the sharing exercises. Under the cloak of learning from others they were assuming a passive role. Some were breaking through barriers of self acceptance and becoming more verbal but others simply attended each week and left without having shared their feelings.

Pairing of quiet, retiring participants became noticeable to leaders and others. This pairing became even more obvious since these folks were asking to be members of the same groups, possible because of their prior friendships. Hence some groups became known as the "workers" while the other groups became known as the "watchers."

Perhaps this was not all bad but it did frustrate leaders who expected each participant to be a "worker." In asking other more

³Samuel Southard, People Need People, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), p. 74.

vocal members how they felt about the silence of other group members we discovered that quiet participants became even more silent, possibly out of fear of displaying their feelings.

c. Towards Group Process We also noticed that some members "leaned" on the process. In other words, they related they were seeking a growth mode which would emerge automatically just because they were attending each week. This kind of response did not seem to aid the growth of these persons but we were often told by a member he or she would no longer be attending because he or she did not receive any benefit from our sharing-caring ministry. In those cases it was inferred by the tentative drop-out that the process just did not work for him or her.

Two methods of coping with our dependent friends surfaced. One was to confront them with our feelings about their subtle resistance to growth by their passive resistance. We clearly spelled out our frustrations as well as the importance of being active and working in the process.

The other method was to simply accept them as they were. We sought a way to do this and at the same time encourage them to grow out of it. "It is most important that a passively dependent person should receive honest acceptance. That is, we must give him an open evaluation of what we see in him."⁴ There was a distinctive danger in doing this for some of our passive friends might easily have continued their game of accepting criticism too easily and thereby

⁴Ibid., p. 75

avoiding it at the same time. On the whole however, our visible frustration and our determination to continue accepting them remained the dominant means of relating to them in these cases.

3. Inadequate Incorporation of New Members Systematic

numerical growth did not occur in our sharing-caring ministry. We experienced rather the addition of members sometimes right in the middle of the year and without the proper introduction to the process. I make this judgement on the basis of feedback from group members. I believe it happened partly because we welcome visitors at any time and often visitors became working participants before we had properly introduced them. I am suggesting here a systematic approach to the enrollment of participants which will serve as an adequate introduction to the process and its goals. I feel the need for something similar to the following:

1. A personal conference with a leader for each new person. This could occur after an inquirer had attended a few sessions as an observer.
2. A proper welcome when visitors attend including our expectations of their role as a visitor.
3. A brief "checking out" both in the growth sessions and in private conversations afterwards.
4. A scheduled conference some time later to ascertain progress, interest, and assimilation into the group.
5. Subsequent individual conferences to ascertain developing or continuing problems.

These procedures will be put into use as we continue our efforts in increasing the numerical size of our group community.

B. Goals Not Achieved

Aside from the consideration of whether or not personal growth became a reality for individuals involved in this ministry I am aware of at least two important targets we may have missed to some degree. They include both Social Action and Congregational Ownership of this ministry.

1. Social Action "The Koinonia groups are today the promise of renewal, but there is a danger that they will fail in their purpose because of a failure of relation to the world and its needs."⁵ As a matter of fact, our visibility in this area has not been evident in our sharing-caring ministry. I sought a progression in our growth ministry from inreach to outreach but somehow never succeeded in this endeavor. I shared from time to time with our groups the essential agenda of dependence-independence-interdependence and yet social action was not a result. At least one writer cautions us against this eventuality in a growth group ministry: "It can diminish a sense of social responsibility precisely because the goal--individual growth--is so important. But, if enthusiasm for individual-actualization is misused as an excuse for privitism, the long-range results will be growth-stifling for everyone on the planet."⁶

⁵Colin W. Williams, in Walter Albritton, Koinonia Ministries Guidebook, (Nashville: Tidings, 1969), p.

⁶Clinebell, p. 147.

Not long ago I introduced to our governing board the need for our response to the re-settlement of the Vietnamese people. I was quite disappointed by their negative response but in retrospect I believe I would have received more positive response from the constituency of our growth groups. They had the necessary cohesion to undertake the task as well as the cultivated sensitivity and the personal resources needed to assist with this project. It was my failure actually, to tap this resource. An important aspect of our sharing-caring ministry must be to deal effectively and visibly with the priorities of social action.

I can see that our Nurturing Committee composed of our growth group facilitators, must also serve as a functional body enhancing both social concern and responsibility. Although this goal was not achieved it remains within our reach and it may become a valid measure of the communal effect of this ministry.

2. Organization, Planning and Shared Leadership My observation is that overall personal, marital and corporate needs have been met in our sharing-caring ministry but the overall direction and guidance of this ministry has been too disorganized. For the most part I have been responsible for structuring our growth group efforts even though leaders have taken an active part in offering suggestions and ideas for our use. Obviously, leaders have a direct role in leading their particular groups yet they still rely on my prior direction. I will discuss here three aspects of this development.

a. Organization At this point in our ministry I believe we need better organization of our resources, our schedules and our groups.

A clearer use of our resources would include making a more positive impact upon our congregation. Some of our goals discussed earlier in this paper including the attainment of an appreciable amount of "instant community" for new members and Sunday visitors; providing a place for new members "to stand"; and greater self-reliance remain important but not fully experienced ends for us in our sharing-caring ministry.

Presently our schedule for weekly sessions is outlined four weeks in advance and I suspect we need much broader preparation. Additionally, a printed calendar with meeting times, retreats, and special activities would appear helpful, in my opinion. Dividing our ministry time-wise into semesters with beginnings and endings is an option I have discussed with leaders who seem to agree upon this necessity.

The organization of our group constituency is another important factor. I mention this because we still have not resolved such questions as where to place a new member who wishes to participate in this ministry for his or her own marriage enrichment. Sometimes they end up in a marriage enrichment group but other times we ask them instead to participate in a beginning growth group. Another common question remains as to when is the right time to suggest an individual might move from a beginning group to an advanced group. The resolution of these questions lies in part in better planning.

b. Planning Our Nurturing Committee including myself and our co-facilitators could spend more time and effort in planning and structuring this ministry. I am suggesting here that we meet at least four times each year in a uniquely functional mode in order to plan creatively and effectively. I believe one reason we have not done this in the past is because our co-facilitators already serve on a number of functional Church boards and when we meet as a Nurturing Committee they welcome the chance to relate in terms of our sharing-caring model. This does not allow then for enough time in planning this ministry. This has also resulted in the existence of a "missing link" which I suggest is Shared Leadership.

c. Shared Leadership I am not suggesting here that leadership is not shared. Leaders direct their own groups and more and more they provide their own input. In the end, however, leaders look to me as a prime mover in this ministry. I suppose ownership of leadership is still lacking to some degree. I am aware that this development is probably more my fault than anyone else's. This professional paper has served to illustrate at least this need as we continue our ministry and along with other insights gleaned from these efforts I look for a healthy acceptance of ownership among not only co-leaders but group members as well.

Finally, I would include here one consideration in any discussion of the balance between visible active leadership and the democratic group process.

In education we have properly and quite successfully stressed the importance of maintaining a 'democratic' relationship between the teacher and his students. This is good. But let us remember too, that the primary responsibility of a leader is to lead, and that by doing so he in no way becomes less 'democratic.' The essence of leading is to Initiate Structure-in-Interaction and to orient these structures continually toward the solution of group problems and the accomplishment of the goals prescribed for the group. Research indicates that this 'Structuring' can be engaged in with no sacrifice of Consideration. In our opinion, leader behavior characterized by high Initiation of Structure and high Consideration represents the ideal of democratic leadership that we all seek.⁷

⁷Andrew W. Halpin, "Evaluation Through the Study of the Leader's Behavior," in Clarence Gratton Kemp, Perspectives on the Group Process, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 266.

II. CONGREGATIONAL EVALUATION OF THIS MINISTRY

A. Numerical Responses Recorded

A copy of the form I used for this feedback process is listed in the Appendix of this paper. Several categories are included along with the recorded responses of congregational members. This represents a cross section of from forty one to fifty six members of our congregation which is about one third of our confirmed membership. I will discuss each category as it is listed on the report sheet and include other pertinent information as well.

1. Congregational Climate This was an attempt to measure the effect of our sharing-caring ministry in making our congregation a warmer and more expansive community. Fifty six responses are recorded with the total of fifty listed under numbers five through seven. Only one respondent marked the number one here; three marked number four and two marked number three. This would seem to indicate that persons completing the forms felt that this ministry resulted mostly in making our congregation a warm, expansive fellowship. The total number in categories six and seven, (thirty eight) lends credence to the conclusion that the majority in this sample felt congregational climate had been noticeably improved.

2. Acceptance of Persons The highest number of the fifty three respondents indicated number six as their choice here. This could mean that the majority feel acceptance of persons has been

witnessed. Since thirty one of the fifty three who responded are among those actively participating in this ministry there may be some unintentional bias here since group members tend to color their observations with enthusiasm. However, only two reported a response of one; one reported a three; seven a four, with the remainder marking from five to seven.

3. Exclusiveness-Inclusiveness The spread of responses here is much more even although it can be seen that the majority marked numbers five through seven. No group member marked below three, while the majority marked six. The composite of both group and non group respondents indicates nineteen marking six with fourteen marking five. Eight marked seven, half of these were group participants.

4. Feelings A major purpose of this sharing-caring ministry was to be that we would enjoy a constructive approach to feelings, allowing both positive and negative expressions. Hence the following information is divided between repression and morality of feelings.

a. Repression of feelings This was included because I believe it is important to uncover whether we had become a sensitized community, aware of the affect of our people. It can be seen that most respondents marked either five or six; none marked one and eight marked seven. Of the total of fifty five participating in the survey, forty three marked in the ranges of four through six.

b. Morality of feelings This was an attempt to surface whether or not our total Church community had learned to accept feelings in a

non-judgemental manner. Fifty five responded with an appreciable spread throughout the middle ranges. Heaviest concentration was in scores from four through six; this becoming a consistent pattern of response. The highest category of seven was chosen by only two persons. Three non-group members are among the nineteen who marked category number three.

5. Criticism This was discussed early in this paper in the section entitled, Purpose of this Ministry. Converting criticism into effective leverage for growth was one purpose we sought by means of our growth groups.

The scoring by respondents included a total of ten markings under number six; eleven under number seven; and fifteen under number five. There is one response each under numbers three and four. This would seem to indicate that respondents noticed growth in this area even though participants spread their scores from one through seven. The majority of recorded responses are clustered under numbers five and six.

6. Friendship This was an attempt to measure whether we had facilitated the quality of community in which new members and visitors would find "a place to stand," mentioned above in the discussion of the psychological basis for this ministry.

The majority of respondents indicated they believe more than a few friendships have been created and enhanced as a result of this ministry. Forty six of the fifty five respondents marked numbers five through seven inclusive. Thirteen of the twenty one who marked

seven as their choice are regular group participants. This objective feedback reinforces my own rather subjective impression that friendships have increased as a direct result of our sharing-caring ministry.

7. Recruitment This topic was included to determine whether group members in their enthusiasm had become offensive while recruiting new growth group members. Since most of our recruitment currently is in the form of person to person invitation I believe this is a valid statement for this survey. We certainly wanted to avoid in our recruitment any judgements of being pushy or otherwise ineffective. I don't believe there was eliteism or superiority displayed among group life members. An additional aspect was whether or not we had actually made our recruitment efforts broad enough to include everyone in our parish. I wondered if some parishioners experienced a sense of being left out of this ministry altogether.

Only twenty two responses are recorded here and I attribute that to the possibility that some respondents just didn't know how to respond to the statement about dissatisfaction in recruitment efforts. Only twenty one responded to the statement about being asked to participate. The survey does include similar limited response to other statements and I believe this is partially because our respondents were not a control group but simply a number of volunteer respondents who were willing to participate.

No one marked below four in the two statements about recruitment. The greatest number of responses are clustered around numbers six and seven which seems to indicate that most respondents felt genuinely accepted and wanted by group members and most were

asked more than once or twice.

8. Worship Life During the last two years I have introduced our new contemporary worship service which is a product of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship. During this service there is a rubric for "passing the peace," which has become for us the opportunity to render gifts in the form of love letters. Group members agree to participate by writing love letters to various members of the worshipping community and present them during the "passing of peace."

The response is often visibly significant for both letter writers and letter recipients. Non group members are among those who receive these love letters and this serves to affirm some common ground among the total worshipping community. Many who receive these love letters are visibly moved and they express their appreciation to the letter writers after the worship service. It could be said that this response prompts the beginning of further authentic intimacy as well as serving to include non group members in the arena of growth. From the survey sheet it can be seen that a large segment of respondents believe worship in our parish has been enhanced as a result of this sharing-caring ministry.

9. Growth The survey was an attempt to measure signs of growth in at least three ways:

a. Growth of group members Most of the twenty four respondents marked five or above in this category. Only five of those who marked seven are group members. Apparently most of those recording scores believed growth did occur among group participants. This could be

interpreted as an indication of positive change in attendees.

b. Growth as a visible dynamic This is somewhat different from the preceding category in that it was designed to measure the ownership of growth among both group and non-group persons.

Of the total twenty two respondents the majority listed number five or above in their response. Only two marked number four and no one marked a score lower than four. Hence it could be concluded that respondents feel that growth has become an important mode for a portion of our congregation.

c. Growth as a personal reality All but one respondent marked either six or seven. Sixteen of the twenty two marked the highest score of seven. One person marked number four but there are no lower scores recorded here. Hopefully, this means that growth has become an important goal for the large majority of those participating in this survey.

10. Therapeutic Factors All but two of the twenty two respondents marked numbers five through seven. While two marked the highest score of seven, the majority of ten marked number six. No one marked below number four. Results recorded in this category seem to reflect the opinion of participants that group members have moved significantly away from the problem oriented aspects of the medical model but at the same time indications are that group participants could become appreciably more functional and mature. This observation has been shared with our group community during sharing-caring sessions.

11. Leadership This discussion is based on the "Leader Evaluation Scale" incorporated as part of the Appendix of this paper. Responses recorded are those of group members only.

In this scale, feedback indicates helpful listening and trusting on the part of leaders is experienced. A high number of responses are assigned to leader communication. I feel these scores are significant since the majority are clustered around numbers six and seven.

Scores are more evenly spread in response to whether leaders provide resources and strategies. On the other hand, respondents marked scores of from five to seven as to the responsibility of leaders. Perhaps this means that leaders in this case do exhibit appropriate leadership while at the same time there is a need for them to exercise more resourcefulness. The final category which reflects leadership evaluation tendencies reveals that the majority selected number five as the most valid score. Since evaluation and regular spontaneous feedback are a part of our sharing-caring ministry perhaps we have ample opportunity to improve leadership styles in this fashion.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION:

PRESENT STATUS AND PLANS FOR FUTURE

A. Weekly Sharing and Caring

Our weekly growth sessions are now an established part of the ministry of this congregation. Each Thursday evening we enjoy the attendance of from thirty five to forty five persons, with our average attendance being forty in number. It is most likely that the total number in attendance each week will increase since new persons are present from time to time. New group members have offset the small number who fail to return.

I will relate here information about the uniqueness of each group and sketch some of our plans for the future of this ministry in our congregation.

1. Present Status of our Groups Each group remains essentially a sharing-caring group but each offers a particular appeal and emphasis. Our beginning growth group is offered to those attending for the first time who have not had experience in a sharing group and who wish to become a part of this process. Another group is offered for single persons who may be either not yet married, divorced or experiencing widowhood. Two marriage enrichment groups are available for married couples, and a group learning and applying insights from Transactional Analysis is also offered. A sixth group for facilitators

meets tri-weekly at another time. This last group is comprised of ten persons who lead the other groups each Thursday evening.

2. Future Constructs of Groups With our current rate of increased attendance it will still be some time before a new group could be offered on Thursday evenings. A fair estimation would be that we could offer another marriage enrichment group sometime next year. A maximum of twelve per group is our policy.

Another option which has been discussed for some time is the establishment of family growth groups which could be made available on Wednesday evenings as part of our Youth Club Program. We have scheduled these tentatively for the beginning of the next school year. Interest has been high among those we have discussed this proposal with in our congregation.

A growth group opportunity for college related youth is a genuine possibility for the future. This group could meet either on or near a college campus at a convenient time. Our congregation has received a grant this past year which is a form of encouragement to us to provide a visible, effective ministry to college age persons. An extension of our growth group ministry is being considered.

B. Weekend Sharing and Caring

Our weekend experiences have served to incorporate new members while at the same time providing for retreatants what they have described as "peak experiences." In general, our retreats have complemented our weekly sharing-caring ministry. Approximately ten retreats have been conducted since these have been offered three times each year. Highest attendance has been thirty six persons while our average attendance at these weekend offerings is thirty.

1. Current Constructs Our present retreat schedule includes offering four retreats each year. Our first retreat in September is a Leader's Retreat which is designed to strengthen our leadership community and to plan together the nature of our weekly sharing-caring ministry.

Two similar retreats are offered during the year in October and April. These retreats are for new group participants although many have attended more than once. A marriage enrichment retreat is scheduled during February.

2. Future Plans Included here is the possibility of a family retreat offered initially as a weekend experience and subsequently as a week long summer camp activity. Interest for this is present among our congregational community.

Not mentioned before in this paper is our Men's Breakfast which is a weekly activity here in our parish. Although primarily a study group this cluster has often assumed the dynamics of a sharing-

caring community. A retreat for men only is being considered which would include most of our men present at this weekly activity.

Our future plans for both weekly and weekend sharing-caring activities seem a bit broad as well as ambitious but we are now enjoying an appropriate yet encouraging response to these offerings from both parish members and community members. The Spirit of our God seems to be at work enabling, enriching and equipping our friends in a wholesome, refreshing manner through this sharing-caring ministry.

I wish to thank here all participants who suffered through my many mistakes as I have tried to shepherd this ministry. I am deeply grateful to my fellow facilitators for their faithfulness, partnership, and many hours of hard work; and finally I want to affirm this congregation in their response and acceptance of this ministry. They have allowed me to grow both professionally and personally. I look forward to the continuing enrichment of our lives together.

APPENDIX A

A SAMPLING OF MATERIALS DEVELOPED AND USED

Group Contract	93
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Retreat Discussion Guide	96
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Bible Studies for Growth	
Christian Love at Work: Expressive-Responsive . .	98
Be An Effective Leader: Dominant-Submissive . . .	100
Dealing With Your Depression: Depressive-	
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Confrontation Audit	109

GROUP CONTRACT

1. My regular presence
2. My regular devotional life
3. My prayers for my fellow pilgrims
4. My regular worship life
5. My unfailing confidence
6. My willingness to change; grow
7. The absolute priority of AGAPE - Christian love
8. My faithfulness in doing homework.
9. My enthusiasm for NEW LIFE
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.

(signed)

(date)

TEAM BUILDING

Contract for care partners -

What we will give each other:

1. Pray regularly, specifically for each other
2. Maintain personal contact with each other during the week
3. Sharing - as a help, not a hindrance
4. Reinforcement of the socialization process
5. Be aggressive listeners
6. Utilize loving confrontation
7. Utilize affirmation, encouragement
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

What we will give the group:

1. Our uniqueness
2. Identification
3. Our aggressive growth
4. Answers, solutions
5. Timely direction
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Briefly state your answers to the following questions:

What do you expect to receive for yourself from this retreat?

What do you expect to receive from your spouse as a result of this retreat?

What do you expect to receive from your fellow group member as a result of this retreat?

To be completed at the conclusion of the retreat:

Did the retreat meet your expectations in each of the above categories?

In what way has your attitude changed towards yourself?

In what way has your attitude changed towards your spouse?

In what way has your attitude changed towards your fellow Pilgrims?

- I. Thank you for being a part of this Discussion group.
What do you feel that God has been saying to you at this Retreat?
- II. Read John 21:15-21

Does God expect us to love the un-loved and the unlovable?

Can we love a person too much?

Why is it that we find it so hard to love some people?

What should be our main concern for other people?

Is there really a generation gap (between the sheep and the lambs)? Can it be bridged? If so, how?
- III. Do you find it easy to love yourself? In two minutes tell the person next to you what you like about yourself. Then let him tell you what he heard you say.
- IV. Conversational Prayer.....

THE BIBLE - THE BOOK OF NEW LIFE

Use the scriptures as a resource for the following obstacles to NEW LIFE.

FEAR

Proverbs 3:5-6

Psalm 23

I John 4:7-21

Luke 12:22-31

INFERIORITY

Psalm 103

Luke 7:21-23

Matthew 5:1-16

Romans 8:31-39

HATE - ANGER

Romans 2:1-11

James 1:19-27

I Corinthians 12:12-13:13

GUILT

Psalm 32

Luke 7:36-50

John 8:1-11

Luke 15:11-24

1. Use the page entitled "Prayer - an act of Surrender" to list your areas of need. Be honest and specific.
2. Study and meditate upon the passages listed above for each category as you have listed them. Do one category at a time; complete it fully and return to the next category following these three steps.
3. Pray audibly - Let Prayer be an act of surrender -- God loves you!

CHRISTIAN LOVE AT WORK

Expressive-Responsive vs Inhibited - Bible Study

Learning to communicate effectively what we feel is not always easy. If your score was low do not get discouraged but recognize that growth in this trait is a lifelong process.

Here are some suggestions:

LEARN TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF FEELINGS.

Study the following passages for New Testament examples. John 15:1-5. In John 16:20-22 notice how Jesus uses the language of emotions. In John 13:21-26 see how Jesus verbally confronts His adversary and then effectively demonstrates what He is trying to say.

PUT YOUR FEELINGS INTO ACTIONS.

See John 13:5. In this verse Jesus put His feelings into actions. Patient love is seen in verse 8, chapter 8 of St. John. Read through John 2:13-17. Did Jesus effectively communicate anger? Verse 17 provides a clue.

DEAL CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH YOUR FEARS.

In prayer tell God how you feel about becoming a warm, open person. Recall that His presence is with you whatever your feelings are and that others have overcome greater obstacles with even greater fears.

Socrates and others faced death without fear but Jesus was filled with fear as He prayed in the garden before His death. Today the death of Socrates may be significant to some but the death of Jesus has changed the entire world!

The apostle Paul feared for his life often, yet persisted in carrying the Gospel to foreign, unknown and sometimes hostile communities. Paul found confidence in the confession, "His Grace is sufficient for me."

Your fellow saints today are similar to you in their fears. The following typical statements illustrate this point: "I couldn't do it, I just don't know enough about the Bible." "If I spoke up then everyone would see what a dummy I am by my stupid questions." "Someday when I get the chance I'm going to tell them how much I love them." "I don't want to be the only one who hugs and kisses everybody." "I don't want to appear superficial."

Ask God to take such negativity away and then proceed to obey your impulses of kindness, joy, appreciation, affection, friendship, etc.

Learning to become Expressive-Responsive is as simple as letting what you feel inside show on the outside. If this seems difficult, just give yourself a chance and a lot of time - RESULTS WILL COME - with patience and practice.

The following daily Bible Studies are designed to encourage your growth in this area. Do not feel you have to write in all the answers to the questions. However, please attempt to complete the assignment at the end of the lesson.

Study the following verses:

I Corinthians 16:20; I Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 5:26 and I Peter 5:14.

Study Matthew 26:6-13. Notice the reference to "touching" and "eating". Notice how Matthew described the ointment; the jar; the anger of the disciples and the reaction of Jesus.

Study Mark 10:13-16. Why did the people bring children to Jesus?

_____.

Did the disciples disguise their reaction?_____.

How did Jesus react when He noticed the disciples?_____

_____.

Jesus did three things in verse 16. What were they?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____.

ASSIGNMENT: Here's one or two steps I am taking to improve my score in this trait:

BE AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

Being an effective leader starts with the desire to help people. This should be our basic motivation. Such a goal, developed and executed objectively, is the main reason for leadership. This could be expanded of course, to helping animals, nature, etc.

The problems arise when the too aggressive person uses people and situations to further his/her own interests. On the other hand, the passive person may have much sympathy and regard for others but fail to realize that this definition of leadership includes the desire to better oneself.

Too dominant persons are known by some of the following:

1. Gets in arguments frequently.
2. Is dissatisfied if he/she is the loser in some form of competition.
3. Sees competition in almost everything.
4. Is unhappy unless he/she is the leader.
5. Believes "nice guys finish last".
6. Seeks to satisfy his/her needs regardless of the needs of others.
7. Can't stand to be wrong.
8. Considers things more important than people.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.

The submissive person can be equated with some of the following:

1. Uncomfortable as a leader to the extent of avoiding leadership.
2. Doesn't get his/her ideas across.
3. Isn't known well or understood even by closest friends, family and associates.
4. Shows little evidence of energy, enthusiasm.
5. Does what others want in spite of his/her needs to the opposite.
6. Places other people on a pedestal.
7. Thinks very little of himself/herself.
8. Asks for help when he/she actually doesn't need it e.g. doesn't need it because he/she is entirely capable of handling the situation.
9. Hesitates to ask for help when he/she does need it.
10. Dislikes "pushy" people.
- 11.
- 12.

If your score was 20 or below in Self Reliance it means you do not always demonstrate confidence in yourself, and competence in what you undertake. Perhaps you need others; i.e. their encouragement or presence to complete everyday tasks. You look to them for ego-support

Be An Effective Leader con't.

and without it you do things poorly or not at all. Many Church members demonstrate these traits. They look for approval and success in what they are doing. If it is not successful or others are not too impressed, they may even resign or ask to be excused from further church responsibilities. In some cases, they are so dependent they avoid any assignment tossed in their direction.

The Apostle Paul challenges, "Quit ye like men, be strong." The Church is composed of people with great talent and resources - if only they would reach out to God and live up to their potential.

If your score was 20 or below in Sense of Personal Freedom, it means you do not feel you have the basic freedom to function as an individual. Perhaps others determine your life-style to the point where you are not living as you prefer.

Possibly you have misconstrued the Gospel to mean following a system of Laws. You may even resent God because of your "station" in life. In a burdensome marriage or a troubled home one can be caught in a web constructed by the selfishness of others. A person's job can contribute to the same condition if it handicaps a person financially, professionally and personally. Man is born to be free and unless he is terribly passive any form of restriction is bound to be resented.

Growing beyond resentment to effective leadership will take much practice and some time. Your group experience is one of encouragement to leadership. Pursue your growth in this area aggressively - you can be an effective leader!

BE AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

"Freedom is what we have - Christ has set us free! Stand then, as free men and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again."

Having the freedom to determine your lot in life is one basis for becoming an effective leader. To put it simply, you cannot lead others if you are overwhelmed by the circumstances of your own life. Further, happy people are those who have a voice and vote in the conduct of their personal lives. Listed below are some definite guidelines to assist you in becoming a freer person. Study them carefully and then use the format on the page following.

CONTEMPLATION i.e. Locate the sources. Begin by asking where the pressure comes from that makes you feel tied down; restricted. It could easily come from your marriage, job, family, in-laws, church, friends, relatives, business associates, peer group or even yourself. Often our behavior is conditioned by childhood expectations of ourselves and our life situations. The source may be several of these or others and it may have multiple roots. Whatever the case, identify and list the pressure points as you see them now.

VALIDATION How valid are your conclusions reached above? Is your freedom limited by something or someone else or is it actually a restriction you have placed upon yourself? Talking your conclusions over with someone who knows you may help a great deal here. Validate your conclusions! Be honest and consider all possibilities. A majority of problems that restrict us are nearly problems because we want or allow them to be so.

VIABILITY What are the possibilities for change? Some circumstances cannot be changed for a long time but will come as the result of patient striving. BE CREATIVE AND RESOURCEFUL! There are more than one or two ways to solve a problem. Find alternates! Consider the middle way, open yourself to many different solutions. Be realistic, but allow room for concrete suggestions that could lead to more freedom for you.

CONFRONTATION Use the Confrontation Audit as a resource. Practice with it until you handle each confrontation well. Be sure you confront the right person and the right situation; don't waste your energy on the wrong thing. Remember to be an effective leader you must first have the sincere desire to help people.

RESOLUTION List some specific skills you have to carry through with your new plans. Affirm your ability to use them creatively. Compile a list of specific steps you will take to ensure the resolution of the matter. Interpersonal problems must be faced systematically and

Be An Effective Leader (con't.)

resolutely. Compile an agenda of success and follow it! As the days and weeks pass, review this format to further validate your progression. You Can Be An Effective Leader!

BE AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

Use the outline below to list specific items under each category. Think carefully and constructively. It is helpful to have someone assist you as a resource in supplying the information.

Begin by stating the problem as accurately as you can.

STATEMENT Here's how I see the problem at this time:

CONTEMPLATION Pressures that limit my personal freedom seem to come from the following persons and situations:

VALIDATION Having considered all possibilities, here are my conclusions:

VIABILITY Here are some possibilities for improvement:

CONFRONTATION I will list my scores below and keep trying until I do this well.

Score_____ Score_____ Score_____ Score_____ Score_____

RESOLUTION Here is how I am going to implement my growth:

BE AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

Let's begin by looking at some basic facts. We'll call them our--

AGENDA FOR SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

- Fact #1 You will become a better, more effective leader only by diligence and practice. It does not happen automatically and if you are too easily discouraged your growth could be quite slow.
- Fact #2 You must begin to lead in a small way, with those who are easiest to lead. Eventually you will find yourself leading people you thought you never could. But you begin in a small way.
- Fact #3 You must do your homework! An effective leader is one who is well informed and well prepared with enough resources available to get the task done.
- Fact #4 Leaders must have either complete confidence in themselves or complete confidence in the authority that makes them leaders. In particular, notice the scriptural examples at the conclusion of this study.
- Fact #5 Your devotional life should be a great source of Inspiration. Through His Word, God gives to the believer all power and outstanding credentials. "For everyone who asks will receive, and he who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to him who knocks." Matt. 7:8
- Fact #6 The pursuit of leadership should be rooted in the desire to help people. Jesus told His disciples on the night He was betrayed, "I am your Lord and Teacher and I have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash each other's feet. I have set an example for you..." John 13:14
- Fact #7 A leader must know how to say "No" effectively and efficiently. To be able to refuse a request or even a plea without reflecting negatively on the person involved, is a mark of maturity. Remember Fact #2 - begin small with an individual or situation you can handle.
- Fact #8 Learn and practice the art of confrontation. Our next study will list some specific helps. However, confrontation is a necessary part of your life. Don't avoid it. Resolve how to make this a definite area for your growth.
- Fact #9 Get control of your life and keep control! Others will look for you as a leader if you are, for example, calm when others are upset. Display the objectivity that looks beyond a

Be An Effective Leader con't.

sometimes distressing present to a more promising future. Find out where you are going in life and if it is healthy, i.e. your goal, stay right on course. Achieve your goals - others will notice.

Fact #10 As an individual, you have something unique to contribute to others. Your ideas, perceptions, and successes need to be shared with others. In addition, as Christians we are mindful of the need for us to be "representatives of a better way" in this tired, distressed world. Resolve to be a person who listens but also contributes, who deeply loves but also makes suggestions, who grows as a leader but also "fulfills his/her ministry."

We have some interesting scriptural models to share with this study. Read each selection and think about the questions that follow:

See John 15:16 By what authority were the disciples made leaders? By what authority are we to be leaders?

Read Exodus 3:11 Did Moses consider himself a leader? What enabled him to become and function as a great leader?

In Judges 6:15 Notice the reasons Gideon lists for hesitating to be a leader. Are these reasons valid for us? Discuss.

Why did Saul hesitate in I Samuel 9:21? Can you identify with that hesitation?

As he considered leadership, what did Solomon ask of God in I Kings 3:5-15?

Using graphic language describe Isaiah's reaction to his Call in the temple. Isaiah 6:1-8

Read through Jeremiah 1:4-10. Notice how Jeremiah, one of the bravest prophets, first reacted to his Call.

See Matthew 3:13-15. Have you ever felt as John the Baptist did in this passage? How did Christ relate to John's feelings?

We may not feel that God has Called us in the same way these men were called. Yet, if we believe that God gave them a distinct identity, it should not be difficult for us to agree He has also given us a distinct identity - e.g. The people of God; the communion of saints; the salt of the earth.

He will help us communicate that identity to ourselves and others as we seek to become more effective leaders.

DEALING WITH YOUR DEPRESSION

When depression comes it brings with it some unpleasant side effects. Sometimes the side effects are actually part of the cause of depression and thus it is difficult to know which came first. Whatever the case, without our being aware of it, depression makes us easily tired or discouraged. Ambition may escape us. Even our normal emotional appetite for activities we usually enjoy, e.g. sports, recreation, hobbies, etc., may disappear.

In this somewhat weakened position, the depression leads us to think much less of ourselves. We are prone to underplay our successes and achievements.

Depression causes us to be much more subjective since we wonder what's the matter with us. Prolonged depression may be the result of not feeling forgiven. Our devotional and group experience should lead us to grow in this area. If we try. Trying hard is suggested because it is common to find that persons who experience depression often are also passive persons.

James wrote:

"Confess your faults to one another and be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has a powerful effect."

Let your prayers be reminders that God has forgiven you. He is the Redeemer who bought you with His own blood. Once you have confessed your sins--leave them behind and forget them--Christ has redeemed you. He has not only mended your broken heart - He has given you a new one. More than a repairman - He is the Creator of all things new.

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so..." Wrote the Psalmist. In your prayers, to others, and to yourself,---Say, "I am redeemed"!

Depression can be understood also when we compare it with an opposite. The following tabulation should illustrate:

DEPRESSION

Rarely amuses others
Atrophy, constriction
Death
Loneliness
Withdrawn
Quiet
Moody

EXPRESSION

Laughs and smiles readily
Expansion, growth
Respect for life
Socially aggressive
Emotionally aggressive
Sings often
Worshipful

Depression grown in isolation. Expressed and given to God; shared with fellow Pilgrims; it loses much of its power.

Dealing With Your Depression con't.

If you scored high in submissive as well as depressive, then you are not asserting yourself enough. You may be failing to communicate to others what you want or need. You perhaps think others are more important than you are and consequently are denying some basic needs of your own. Depression comes easily with such an attitude.

If you are both subjective and submissive, then how others act and speak may easily affect you. In such cases, avoid associations with negative minded people; those who constantly criticize or find fault. Seek the company of cheerful persons who are able to see life objectively and with some degree of humor.

Frustration will cause depression. If you can't get what you want one way find another way to get it. If it's impracticable or impossible to achieve or acquire - accept reality; you can't have everything you want. For the most part, however, find a better way to get what you need. God has given you an excellent faculty for thinking of creative ways to get what you want. Use it!

Make peace with your enemies. Work thoroughly on the Bible study based on Matthew 18. Do not deny your feelings but express them in prayer to God. Honest prayer means telling God exactly how you feel. Anger and resentment can be legitimate vehicles for prayer, so is crying. Just remember, that God does hear your prayers and He does not forsake those who come to Him in need. As you depart from prayer, do so with peace in your heart towards yourself and your enemies. Leave your anger and depression behind. Pray as long as you need to, but work it out before you finish praying. Then live with your hurt and anger behind you. God has made you for love.

Understanding your depression is a first step towards breaking free from its effects. As you continue to grow in this area, remember two important rules.

1. Recognize and accept depression when it comes. Being sometimes physiological in origin, it is a part of life. Prayer, worship, bible study and your group growth are the means by which you can honestly face the negative feelings you have. Work through your feelings thoroughly by these means and be willing to emotionally forsake your depression as your faith in God's presence grows.
2. The Gospel is the most affirmative force in the world. It is termed the "Good News" for a proper reason. Let it be good news for you. Let your whole life and disposition be an affirmation that you are His "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Take confidence in your loving Heavenly Father who understands everything you experience. He waits for you to call upon Him.

CONFRONTATION AUDIT - Role Play Reference**Situation #1**

For some time now your wife has not been an efficient or even acceptable homemaker. Cleaning, laundry, cooking, etc., are not being done. You feel it's time to confront her with these facts.

Your husband never mows the lawns, takes out the trash or puts his shoes in the closet. In general, he's not a good helpmate around the house.

Situation #2

Your wife never makes breakfast or lunch for you. The children are always eating donuts and TV dinners.

Your husband has never been on time for meticulously prepared dinners you have made in the past.

Situation #3

Your wife is not affectionate towards you.

Your husband is never home.

Situation #4

Your husband brings home guests for dinner at a moment's notice. This has often created embarrassment for you.

Your wife doesn't understand how important it is to your job to be able to entertain business associates at home.

Situation #5

Your husband never goes to Church. Your teenage son is resisting efforts to get him to attend Sunday School.

Your wife doesn't realize you work six days a week and need the seventh for rest and yard work.

Situation #6

You feel a strong desire to tell your husband how much you love and appreciate him.

As a husband you rate a "C".

Situation #7

You have just been given the raise and promotion you have worked so hard for these past few years.

You are not the least bit interested in your husband's work.

Confrontation Audit con't.**Situation #8**

Your family finances are in a mess. Your husband will not cooperate with you in planning and executing a budget.

Your wife writes checks when there is no money in the bank to cover them.

Situation #9

Your children will not obey even your slightest commands.

Your wife is always nagging the children.

Situation #10

Your wife always goes to bed 30 minutes after you.

Your husband falls asleep on the couch.

Situation #11

Your husband never takes you out.

Your wife always criticizes you and belittles your position in life.

Situation #12

Your wife is a nominal Christian. She goes to Church but will not involve herself in family devotions or Church activities.

Your husband is on an "ego trip" at church.

Situation #13

Your wife is insecure.

Your husband spends money foolishly.

CONFRONTATION AUDIT

FACTS

RESOLVE

EXPEDIENCY

RESPECT

DECISION

RAW SCORE

FACTS

RESOLVE

EXPEDIENCY

RESPECT

DECISION

RAW SCORE

FACTS

RESOLVE

EXPEDIENCY

RESPECT

DECISION

RAW SCORE

FACTS

RESOLVE

EXPEDIENCY

RESPECT

DECISION

RAW SCORE

APPENDIX B

EVALUATION FORMS

Congregational Evaluation Form	113
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CONGREGATIONAL EVALUATION FORM

Over the past four years we have conducted growth groups for members and friends of our parish. This survey is an attempt to receive your impressions of the impact of this ministry. Please be as specific and critical as you wish in recording your scores.

Check the number on the rating scale that corresponds to your evaluation of the following listed items. For example, if you feel that statement on the left is most accurate then mark numbers one or two appropriately. If you believe the statement on the right is most true then mark six or seven in the same fashion. Please think carefully about each statement before recording your score.

CONGREGATIONAL CLIMATE

We still exhibit the same traditional reserve; groups had no effect here.

Groups have helped to increase warmth to a much greater degree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -	I		II	III	XII	XX	XVIII

ACCEPTANCE OF PERSONS

We still exhibit the same traditional reserve; groups had no effect here.

We have become much more accepting of others as a direct result.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -	II		I	VII	XVII	XXI	V

EXCLUSIVENESS-INCLUSIVENESS

Cliques have been formed in our Church as a result of this ministry.

Group members and non-members agree cliques have not been a consequence.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -			III	XII	XIV	XIX	VIII

FEELINGS

Both positive and negative feelings were repressed.

Verbal and non-verbal expressions of feelings increased.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -		III	I	VII	XIX	XVII	VIII

MORALITY OF FEELINGS

We learned from group members that some feelings are not acceptable.

We became aware that our feelings are morally neutral.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -		I		XIX	XXV	IX	II

CRITICISM

These groups have helped us become aware of our faults and personality weaknesses.

These groups have helped us reduce criticism of self and others.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -	VI	VI	I	I	XV	XX	XI

FRIENDSHIP

We have not made new friends as a result of these groups.

We have made more than a few new friends as a result.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -		I	II	VI	X	XV	XXI

RECRUITMENT

I experienced dissatisfaction in the way I was approached by group members.

I felt genuinely accepted and wanted by group members.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -				III		V	XIV

I was not asked to participate.

I was asked more than once
or twice.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -				II	I	VIII	X

WORSHIP

I see little evidence of benefit
here from this ministry.

Worship life has been greatly
enhanced.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -			I	I	II	XI	VII

GROWTH OF GROUP MEMBERS

People involved did not exhibit
much change.

I saw distinct, measurable
growth among participants.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -			I		IV	XII	V

GROWTH AS A VISIBLE DYNAMIC

This concept of growth is
important to a few persons
only.

Growth is an accepted goal
for an overwhelming majority.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -				II	VII	IV	IX

GROWTH AS A PERSONAL REALITY

The concept of growth is not
very important in my life

Growth is a distinct goal for me.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -				I		V	XVI

THERAPEUTIC FACTORS

Group members became more introspective and problem oriented.

Group members seemed to be increasingly functional and mature.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -				II	VIII	X	II

Some people involved seem to be emotionally or psychologically harmed.

Everyone participating seemed to benefit.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -		I		II	II	VI	IV

TRUST

Suspicion of others remains characteristic.

Much more trust of others is characteristic.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -					VIII	VIII	VI

OWNERSHIP

These groups are important to only a few persons.

Our total membership has decided we need these groups.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -		IV	I	II	III	VII	III

Without the pastor this program would not continue.

We would continue this ministry without the encouragement of our pastor.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -	III	III	I	V	V	IV	

UNDERSTANDING OF THIS MINISTRY

This ministry is essentially for people who have a great many problems.

This ministry is essentially for those with few problems.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded results -		I	II	XI	VI	II	

IN YOUR OWN WORDS PLEASE LIST ONE OR TWO VISIBLE RESULTS OF THIS MINISTRY.

1.

2.

Have you been a participant in this growth group ministry?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you think you will be involved in this ministry in the future?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Date of this report _____.

PLEASE DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM

LEADER-EVALUATION SCALE

Circle the number in each category which agrees most with your conclusion regarding leader performance.

THE LEADER IS RESPONSIBLE

Shows little responsibility for the discussion or in helping the members.

Is responsible in relation to content, process and member welfare.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded responses -			I		III	VI	VIII

THE LEADER PROVIDES RESOURCES

The leader provides little information or personal sharing.

The leader provides helpful information as needed and shares his feeling concerning it.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded responses -		I	I		II	VII	VII

THE LEADER PROVIDES STRATEGIES

Does not provide as needed clarifying summarizing and other functions.

Provides the necessary processes as needed for optimum functioning.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded responses -			II	I	II	VIII	IV

THE LEADER COMMUNICATES

Each member is more an object. The leader does not share his ideas.

Considers each member a person and is honest, open and real.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded responses -		I			I	V	X

THE LEADER LISTENS

Hears the idea but not the person and what it means to him.

Hears the idea and tries to understand the person and what the idea means to him.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded responses -			I		II	V	X

THE LEADER TRUSTS

He tries to assure outcomes; has a low level of expectancy; does not extent freedom.

He has a high level of expectancy; is permissive, and extends freedom in relation to acceptance of responsibility.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded responses -				II	III	IX	II

THE LEADER ENCOURAGES AND CONDUCTS EVALUATION

Provides no encouragement or opportunity for evaluation.

The leader provides opportunity, initiates, encourages and assists members in evaluation.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recorded responses -		I		I	VI	V	IV

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